

READER'S DIGEST

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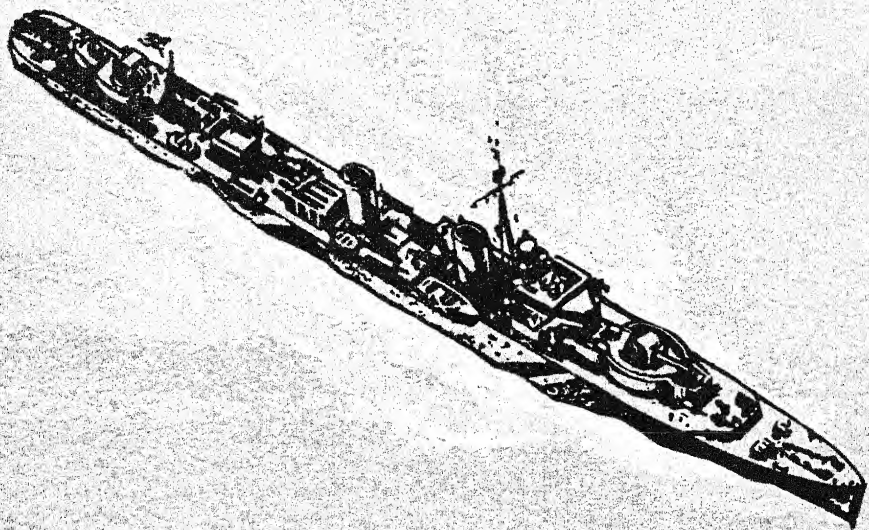
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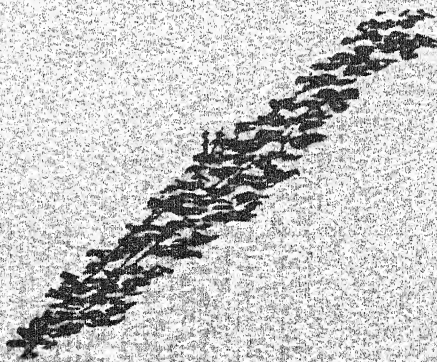
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THE ENEMY BELOW

A condensation of the book by

COMMANDER D. A. RAYNER

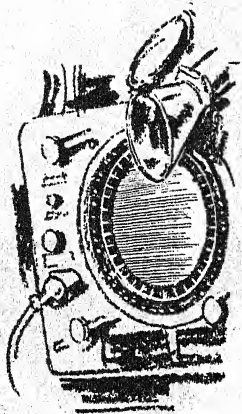


THIS is the story of a duel at sea in 1943; of a long-drawn, bitter fight between a solitary British destroyer and a single U-boat that she intercepts in the remote expanses of the Atlantic. The story moves from crisis to crisis as the two Captains, each struggling for supremacy, read each other's thoughts in a contest in which the loser may pay with his life—and the lives of his crew.

Factual, authentic and exciting, this first novel gives a strikingly dramatic account of men in extreme danger, fighting for victory and their very existence—two resourceful enemies, so evenly matched that no one could foretell the outcome.

"This admirable first novel holds suspense to the end."—Thomas Gilbey in *The Tablet*

Radar Sparring



2021, Zone Time
Tuesday, 7 September 1943

His MAJESTY's destroyer *Hecate* climbed the side of each wave as it swept down upon her starboard beam, hung poised on the crest and then slithered down the far side.

Once the dizzy motion became familiar it was no longer unpleasant, and the two officers wedged into positions of purposeful repose in the Captain's sea cabin considered themselves to be comfortable enough. Between them on the bunk was a chessboard. The Captain and the Doctor played together each evening—provided the enemy was not expected.

Leaping forward, the Captain took a white bishop with his queen. The Doctor, after due thought, lifted a knight and waved it vaguely over a square whence it would threaten the black queen.

A telephone buzzed above the Captain's head. He reached for it without taking his eyes from the chessboard.

"Captain's cabin."

Both officers could hear the voice of the officer of the watch: "Radar Office reports a small surface contact green seven-oh; range ten thousand."

"Get the plot on to it, Mackeson, and let me know its course and

speed." He hung up and turned again to the game. "Go on. Your move, man."

The Doctor, desperately anxious to see the ship in action, moved the piece he held without thinking.

The Captain's hand flicked across the board. "Checkmate."

"But, sir, if that is a U-boat——"

"Whether it is or isn't, you shouldn't let your mind wander. That radar contact was five miles away." The Captain was busily setting the chessmen back in their correct lines at each side of the board. "I wouldn't like you to whip my appendix out if you can't keep your mind on the immediate problem."

The phone buzzed and the Captain picked up the receiver again.

"Plot reports target's course approximately one-eight-oh; speed fourteen knots. Radar says the blip is quite definite, sir."

"Thank you, Mackeson. I'll be up soon. Negative zigzag." He hung up. "The plot will have more chance if our course is steady."

"If it is a Ube—what in the world is it doing out here?"

The Doctor had voiced the Captain's own thoughts.

"Dunno," he said as he rose and took his oilskin and sou'wester from their hook. "Let's go and ask it, shall we?"

THE TROPICAL Atlantic wind, warm, moist and friendly, caressed the Captain's face as he came through the black-out flap on to the forebridge. Mackeson and the signalman on duty were grouped round the standard compass.

The dim blue light under the swinging card revealed nothing at all of their oil-skin-clad figures, so that their faces, like masks etched with deep shadows, hung bodiless in the windy night. Almost invisible above and behind them, the high foremast swept the starless night; below, the sea erupted with livid flashes of phosphorescent light.

"Where is it now?" the Captain asked.

"Green oh-eight-five; range steady, sir," Mackeson answered.

"Bearing?" the Captain asked.

"Two-one-oh, sir."

"Bring her round to two-one-oh."



"Aye aye, sir."

He heard the orders given as he moved to the voice-pipe that led to the plot, and felt the ship heave as her bow was brought round to head into the waves.

He bent to the voice-pipe. "Forebridge—Plot." A pause. "Captain here—what's the target doing?"

"Course about two-one-oh, sir. Speed about fourteen knots. Range has been steady."

"Who's the plotter?"

"Andrews, sir. Sick-berth attendant."

"Very well, Andrews—sure you can handle it? I don't want to go to action stations until we know more."

"Yes, sir, sure."

"Good lad." He dropped the flap cover of the voice-pipe and turned to the Doctor, who was close behind him. "Doc, after the navigator, that Andrews of yours is the best plotter in the ship."

"I'm glad he's better at that than his master is at chess."

"Does it still rankle?" The Captain laughed.

The Doctor was twenty-nine, and that made him, with the exception of the thirty-two-year-old Captain and the elderly engineer, four years older than any other officer in the ship. He was closer to his commanding officer than any of the others, and a certain lack of formality existed between them. "Sure, it rankles," he said.

The Captain crossed to the compass platform, whence a voice-pipe led direct to the radar office. "Captain here. Who's on the set?"

"Petty Officer Lewis, sir."

Lewis should not have been on watch until action stations had been sounded. Already the Captain guessed that the whole ship knew that they had a suspicious radar contact.

"What's it look like, Lewis?"

"Small, sharp blip, sir. Just about right for a U-boat."

"Thank you, Lewis." He raised his face from the pipe. "Mr. Mackeson, increase to two hundred revolutions."

"Aye aye, sir."

As the Captain went to rejoin the Doctor he felt the deck beneath his feet begin to throb with ever faster pulsations. The *Hecate* heaved her body half out of the water—a body in which were crowded over a hundred and forty human beings. Now the ship was plunging downward, the powerful drive of her propellers forcing her into the next sea. She shuddered, paused as a horse will to gather its haunches beneath it, and then shot skyward once more, while clouds of water were flung over the bridge. Then she was down again, into the next sea's flank—cutting it, shivering with the strain.

"It's too much," the Captain shouted to the Doctor. "I'll have to ease her down." And to the officer of the watch, whose water-glistening

oilskins caught the wild light from the phosphorescent waves: "Ease her down to one-five-oh, Mr. Mackeson."

The bell from the radar office buzzed angrily.

"Forebridge," the Captain called.

"Fair shook the set up that last one, sir."

"All right, Lewis. I've eased her down. Still holding contact?"

"Yes, sir. Target's dead ahead now, sir, range nine thousand."

"Thank you, Lewis." Back to the Doctor: "I'm dead sure it's a U-boat; it's too small to be anything else. Don't ask me what it's doing in this deserted piece of ocean, but I do believe it's going to give me just what I've always wanted, a single-ship duel between a U-boat and a destroyer."

"What odds would you lay?"

"So near even that I'd have to know the other captain, Doc. As far as the ships are concerned, I'd put my money on the U-boat."

"But you reckon you'll win?"

"Of course. But if he's the man I hope he is, we'll have a wonderful hunt."

"Captain, sir." The First Lieutenant had joined them.

"Hullo, Number One, have we got you out of your bunk?"

"Just turning in, sir, when you altered course. Thought I'd come up and see if you wanted me."

"We've got a possible radar contact on a U-boat. We're chasing dead up his tail, and he's four and a half miles ahead. I don't think I'll get any closer until the weather moderates. It will by dawn in these latitudes. Nine o'clock now; nine hours at fourteen knots, a hundred and twenty-six miles to the south-west when dawn comes—if he doesn't spot us before."

"He's almost certain to do that. He's got radar too."

"But no radar mattress aft. He's got to swing his ship if he wants to get a bearing on anything that's right behind him. If we keep station on him, it's my bet his radar operator will think it's a ghost echo. If we closed up on him, or drew off to one side, then he'd know us for what we are. Am I right?"

"Sounds very foxy to me, sir. If we should scare him into submerging

in this sea, our asdic would be pretty useless, and he'd probably give us the slip."

"Exactly, Number One." And to the officer of the watch: "Mr. Mackeson, I want to keep station exactly ten thousand yards astern of the target until four o'clock tomorrow morning." He turned back. "Better get your head down, Number One."

"Good night, sir," the First Lieutenant said.

A few minutes later the Doctor also left the bridge.

HER SPEED reduced, the ship crept after her quarry—the heart of her purring like a great cat, and the snaking tail of her wake laid flat to the waves. As the Captain turned over the events of the last hour the continuous note of the asdic impinged on his conscious mind.

"Mr. Mackeson. Tell the asdic hut to cease transmissions and to keep a listening watch only." The *pings* of the underwater detection apparatus under good conditions could be heard at great distances.

Silence again on the wind-swept bridge. Should he break radio silence, signal the Admiralty about the contact? Instinct said no. But what was behind this instinct? Was it because he wanted so badly to fight his battle alone, without interference, that he was refraining from sending a signal until interference could not possibly reach him? To challenge single-handed such a deadly foe was to risk his ship and his men's lives.

His target, if it were indeed a U-boat, was obviously going somewhere with a very definite object. A U-boat represented too much of her nation's energy to be permitted to cruise aimlessly far from the convoy routes, and the speed of this boat suggested considerable urgency. At fourteen knots, in this sea, conditions aboard would be extremely unpleasant. Was she going to land agents on the coast of Brazil? To refuel in the neutral Argentine? He wished he knew to what rendezvous she hurried.

Rendezvous? Then he understood! The U-boat was steaming to meet a supply ship in this deserted part of the ocean, or an armed merchant raider, or—his mind boggled at the thought—even a German pocket battleship.

If this were so, it was even more important not to flush the bird too

soon. A signal would stand a good chance of being monitored by the efficient German radio service. With stations all the way from Norway's North Cape to Dakar in West Africa, they could determine his position and warn the U-boat and whatever it was going to meet. He must make a signal as soon as the submarine dived, make it very short and hope to get it through before the Germans had time to line up the direction-finding sets. He must get Johnson, the telegraphist, to pass the signal in something less than five minutes, using the emergency prefix which would ensure priority. But the U-boat must first be sighted. A report based on a suspicious but unclassified radar echo might cause error and uncertainty in London.

"Mr. Mackeson, how's the target?"

"Two-one-oh; ten thousand, sir."

"Good. Keep it so."

He crossed to the voice-pipe to the radar office and lifted the flap. "Lewis," he said, "are you getting tired?"

"No, sir. I can carry on until dawn if you wish."

"I'd feel happier. We shan't need you once the light comes."

"Aye aye, sir."

Lewis, the Captain thought, was a great asset. He turned to Mackeson. "Eleven thirty now. I'm going down to my sea cabin. I want to be called at four. Good night, Mackeson."

It was good to get out of his clumsy oilskins. The bo'sun's mate had brought him a cup of thick hot cocoa and he licked his lips appreciatively. The Americans, he had heard, drank coffee on the bridge at sea. He thanked heaven he was in the British Navy as he stretched out on his bunk. The ship rose and fell sedately. He ought to sleep, but sleep had never seemed farther away. Tomorrow he would be trying to kill a violent enemy; and just as certainly the U-boat captain would be trying to kill him. He could at least turn these waiting hours to good account by devoting them to thought—and this might well give him an initial advantage over his adversary.

Sooner or later the U-boat's Kapitän would discover the unwelcome fact that an enemy was sitting on his tail. The conditions inside the boat

at that moment leapt to the imagination and brought a smile to his lips. There would be anger, disorder and bitter recriminations, all a poor prelude to battle. It was not to be expected, however, that this would for long impair the efficiency of the very efficient German U-boat service.

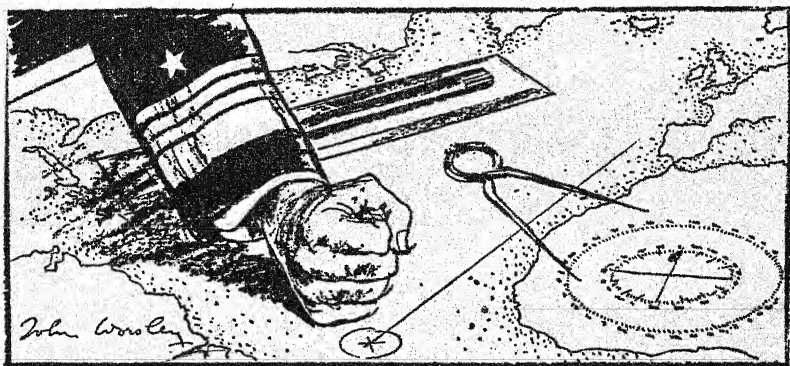
The German would almost certainly risk a peep through his periscope. If he could be sure that only one ship was following him, he'd almost certainly attempt to torpedo her with his stern tubes. Assuming that the U-boat would dive while four miles away from the destroyer, the *Hecate* at fourteen knots would cover the distance in fifteen minutes. This would allow a resourceful U-boat Kapitän plenty of time to plan and execute a torpedo attack. A torpedo would cover the narrowing distance in about two minutes, but it would take five minutes to work out the settings and fire the torpedoes.

Mentally the Captain did his sum. Five minutes for the Kapitän to regain control of his boat after the crash dive. Five minutes to set and fire the torpedoes. A large alteration of the destroyer's course ten minutes after the submarine dived should take it clear of the torpedo attack. But would it? A ship took time to turn, and her momentum would keep her moving in the old direction even though her bow was already turning to the new course. It would be better to give the order for the step aside at eight minutes after the dive.

There was only one point that worried him. Would a U-boat fire torpedoes at a destroyer approaching dead towards him? It seemed a terribly small target at which to aim. But suppose he were deliberately to tempt the German by offering him an easier shot—would that be more likely to draw the enemy's sting? If he altered course by thirty degrees to starboard as soon as the U-boat dived, the Kapitän would think the British ship was trying to avoid making that depth-charge attack which was always so difficult—the one in which the quarry runs straight away from the attacker. Then eight minutes later he would alter the *Hecate's* course sixty degrees to port.

This certainly seemed to be the solution. It was a game of chess played with ships for pieces, and men's lives for stakes.

U-BOAT 121 hurried over the sea. Driving her into the waves, the



powerful Diesels shook her strong hull with vibration. As the lean ship breasted a wave's crest, she would corkscrew wildly before plunging downward, leaving men's innards behind.

The stomach of Korvetten-kapitän Peter von Stolberg was not proof against such violent motion. After refusing his supper, he had turned into his bunk, where, with pills, he had tried to calm the queasiness within him. Only the urgent necessity of getting to a given position on the deserted ocean by a given time had caused him to make this high-speed dash on the surface. As he closed his eyes to shut out his misery he could see the shrewd, dynamic face of the Grand Admiral as he had briefed him on this mission.

"Raider M, the *Cecilie*, has captured a complete set of Allied ciphers. She is herself coming home, but we must ensure against any risk of her non-arrival. She has been instructed to photograph the ciphers and transfer the films to you, for delivery to me here. You are to be in this position"—he indicated the chart between them—"by noon, local time, on the ninth of September, Herr Kapitän—and nothing must stop you. Nothing!" The little man had slammed his fist on the polished top of the great desk behind which he sat.

U-121 had sailed from Brest, apparently with plenty of time to make the rendezvous. But they had been spotted by a British escort group almost immediately and had been forced to travel submerged for almost eight hundred miles before they could shake the British off. Bad weather

had further whittled down the margin to the point where there was now a bare eighteen hours to spare. For that reason the Kapitän was driving his ship and his men unmercifully.

The pills were working now, and the Kapitän slept. Above, Leutnant-zur-See Erich Kunz had the first watch. It was, he thought, a useless duty, for in no direction could his water-washed eyes see a thing. He was concerned only with keeping himself as dry as possible. Crash would go the long bow into the steep head sea, and the wave, roaring aft along the deck, would break in fury against the four-inch gun, sending masses of water pouring over the men crouched in the exposed conning tower.

A head and shoulders appeared through the hatch. "Radar operator says it's time to swing her, sir."

"Very well."

Through the voice-pipe Kunz ordered the alteration of course that would enable the radar to cover the arc that lay ten degrees on either side of the stern. The practice was to swing the boat twenty degrees to one side once every hour to make sure that nothing was astern.

A moment or two later the head and shoulders reappeared.

"Anything to report?" Kunz asked.

"The ground returns from the sea are so bad that the screen's cluttered up with false echoes, Herr Leutnant. There seems to be a ghost echo nine thousand metres astern—very indefinite."

"Anything would be in this weather. There're no ships here, and if there are we can't attack them."

"Shall I report to the Kapitän?"

"No—no. He will be angry if he is disturbed. Tell Radar to see if it's still there in an hour's time."

The head and shoulders disappeared, and Kunz settled down to another hour of misery.

An hour later the ghost was still there.

Kunz ordered: "Tell the hydrophone operator to see if he can hear any asdic transmissions, and report to me."

Five minutes later the messenger was back again. "No transmissions audible, sir."

"Thank you." Kunz, satisfied that the radar had chosen this occasion



to trot out one of the innumerable ghost echoes of which it was capable, continued to do his utmost to keep himself dry.

Kunz was relieved at midnight by Oberleutnant Otto von Holem. There was no love lost between these two. Kunz considered von Holem a useless sprig of the nobility, and von Holem thought Kunz beneath contempt. The exchange had been as short as duty permitted. At the last moment Kunz had paused half-way down the hatch. "Oberleutnant, there's a ghost echo on the radar nine thousand metres astern."

"You have reported it to the Kapitän?"

"No. The ghost has been there for three hours. It can be nothing else." He added from one rung farther down: "Anyway, I thought you'd like the pleasure of stirring up that hornets' nest." The Kapitän's temper was notorious.

"*Verflüchter Kerl*," von Holem murmured and turned to duck as a solid sheet of water flung itself over the conning tower.

Four hours later von Holem was relieved by the Executive Officer, Oberleutnant Heini Schwachofer. The two officers stood for a moment looking over the long bow as it creamed into a wave. The wind was gone, and only a spatter of spray fell into the conning tower.

"Anything to report?"

"Nothing. A ghost echo turned up in Kunz's watch. Dead astern nine thousand. I nearly reported it to the Kapitän, but I'm sure it is a ghost. It's been there now for seven hours."

"I agree. It can't be the enemy. He's not the patient sort. Anyway there are no escorts in this part of the world. Sleep well, Otto."

Von Holem lowered himself down the hatch.

The watch dragged on. A pale sheen flitted on the advancing waves, and dawn crept over the ocean. Schwachofer glanced at his watch—twenty minutes past six—and, putting the binoculars to his eyes, he began a routine sweep. Jagged wave tops ahead, long valleys on the beam, the smooth backs of retreating waves astern and—

"*Zum Teufel!*" He lowered his glasses, wiped them hurriedly and looked again. Then he stretched out his hand and pressed the alarm for emergency diving stations. The strident roar of the Klaxon, not heard for the last fortnight, filled the boat.

"SUBMARINE diving, sir." The cry was taken up by many voices.

"Commence asdic sweep: steer two-four-oh: note the time, Pilot. Yeoman, get a position from the navigator and get this signal off to the Admiralty right away. Number One, sound off action stations and let me know as soon as seven minutes are up." The Captain's orders came crisply and with certainty.

The telephone from the radar cabinet buzzed. The Captain raised the hand set. "Forebridge."

"Echo's faded, sir." Lewis's voice sounded tired.

"Thank you, Lewis. We've seen the U-boat submerge—and thank you for your fine work. Go and get your head down. I'll send for you if I need you."

"Aye aye, sir."

The Captain replaced the hand set. While he had been talking he had been conscious of many feet clattering up ladders; the clang of iron as some hatches were closed and clipped, and other hatches, up which the ammunition would be sent to the guns, were flung open. Now the apparent chaos had subsided to the quiet efficiency of a prepared ship. The *Hecate* had drawn her sword, and the naked blade was bright in her hand.

From many places came the reports. "Coxswain at the wheel, sir." . . . "B gun cleared away, sir." . . . "Depth-charge crews correct, sir." . . . "Asdic hut closed up, sir." . . . "Plot closed up, sir." . . . "X gun cleared away, sir." . . . "Third boiler connected, sir."

It was, the Captain thought, an evolution that never ceased to thrill—action stations sounded in the presence of the enemy, the incredibly intricate ship coming under the control of one brain.

The First Lieutenant touched his arm.

"Seven minutes, sir."

"In one minute alter course to port to one-eight-oh. Use thirty degrees of wheel. If she does not turn fast enough I'll stop the port engine. I want her on the new course in two minutes."

"Aye aye, sir."

The sun was breaking the horizon's rim. Pale gold light dispersed the last of the dawn's shadow.

"Port thirty, steer one-eight-oh."

He heard the First Lieutenant giving the incisive order, and he moved towards the standard compass. The *Hecate* heeled over as her rudder bit into the water. The slick, satin smooth, was already growing from her port quarter.

The telephone from the asdic cabinet broke the silence. The Captain's arm shot out. "Forebridge."

The asdic officer's excited voice came to him: "Strong hydrophone effect on port bow."

"Bearing?" the Captain snapped.

"Difficult to say, sir. I'd say red three-oh to right ahead."

The Captain looked at his First Lieutenant. "How's her head?"

"Passing two-one-oh, sir."

Captain to asdic cabinet: "Bearing now?"

Asdic cabinet to Captain: "Seems to be crossing the bow, sir. Approximate centre bearing red oh-five to green one-oh. Getting much louder, sir."

Captain to First Lieutenant: "How's her head?"

"Passing one-nine-eight, sir."

Captain down voice-pipe to the wheel-house: "Stop port."

From the voice-pipe: "Port engine stopped, sir."

Captain to asdic cabinet: "Bearing now?"

"Green oh-five to green six-oh."

By the record of their instruments the torpedoes had crossed the bow and were speeding into the barren wastes of the sea. But one could never be quite certain unless one's eyes could confirm the tale told by the clever electrical machines.

"Captain, sir! Captain, sir!" The bridge look-out on the starboard searchlight platform was pointing desperately towards the starboard beam. Hurrying across the bridge, the Captain leaned over to follow the look-out's finger. There, lying across the now blue and sparkling water, were two long white shafts that undulated as the waves crossed their path.

The Captain came back to the compass platform. He felt good. He felt grand. He went to the voice-pipe that led to the plot. "Pilot, give

me a course to a position on two-one-oh three miles from where she dived."

A moment's wait and then from the pipe the navigator's voice: "Two-oh-eight, sir."

"Thank you." The Captain turned to the First Lieutenant. "Bring her back to two-oh-eight. We've drawn his fangs."

The order was passed.

The First Lieutenant's blue eyes were laughing in his tanned face. "I bet the Herr Kapitän is hopping mad."

"I hope so. It may get him rattled—but I doubt it. He's the fighting type or he'd never have sent those 'kippers' after us. He'll give us a run for our money."

Willis, the yeoman, approached. "Message to the Admiralty passed, sir. Johnson told me to tell you it took four minutes ten seconds, sir."

"Thank you, Yeoman. Pass the word to Johnson that I'm very pleased indeed with the time."

The *Hecate* was heeling again as she turned back to starboard after her enemy. Astern, her wake was a gigantic S, the turns almost half a mile in diameter.

Leaning against the voice-pipe to the wheel-house, the Captain could hear snatches of conversation not meant for his ears.

"What I want to know is how the Old Man knew they would try to kipper us."

"'Cos he's got a head on—same as you. The difference is he uses his. That's what he draws his pay for."

Laughing, the Captain flicked down the cover of the voice-pipe. The bell from the asdic buzzed. "Forebridge."

"Submarine echo bearing two-oh-eight, sir. Going away, extreme range."

"Nice job, Hopkins. Keep the plot informed."

AFTER he had clipped down the heavy lower conning-tower hatch, Oberleutnant Schwachofer jumped the last four rungs to the deck and steadied himself by holding on to the ladder. The boat's bow was sinking as they submerged and the deck inclined downward. The clatter of the

Diesels had gone, and in its place was the soft purr of the big electric motors.

The Kapitän came from the wardroom doorway—unshaven, his hurriedly donned coat unfastened. "What is it?"

"A British destroyer, Herr Kapitän."

"Nonsense! Did you sight her?"

"Indeed I did, sir. I fear, Herr Kapitän"—Schwacher was going cautiously—"that she has been tailing us since just after eight o'clock last night. We thought it was a ghost echo."

"Impossible." The veins were standing out in the Kapitän's neck and he shivered as he fought for mastery of his temper. "Stupid oafs. All of you. Almost ten hours. One hundred and forty miles you have brought the enemy. You know how important is our mission, and you lead him to our rendezvous."

"I'm sorry, Herr Kapitän."

"Mistakes cannot be rectified in war. Please God the Britisher makes a mistake. Bring the boat to periscope depth at once."

Both officers glanced at the depth gauge, which already showed sixty metres. The Kapitän's standing order was that, at the crash-dive signal, the boat should be taken down to eighty metres.

The Executive Officer issued sharp orders. The hiss of high-pressure air stowed in the big bottles under the deck could be heard expelling the water from the ballast tanks. The needle of the depth gauge stopped, hovered and began to retrace its steps—slowly at first, and then more quickly.

The Kapitän buttoned up his coat as he watched the gauge. One hand stroked his chin. He wished he could have been given time to shave. Twenty metres.

The needle crept more slowly now.

"Course two-one-oh. Four knots. And be prepared to dive deep."

The hiss of the hydraulic rods that brought the big attack periscope from its well sounded through the control-room. The eye-piece with its handles appeared above the deck. Bending, the Kapitän seized them. His back unbent as the periscope continued to rise. His eyes were fixed in the rubber eye-shield.

"Ten metres." Schwachofer spoke crisply. He watched von Stolberg's feet move flatly, gripping the deck, which was feeling the effect of the surface waves.

The Kapitän spoke: "She is not astern." A pause—then: "*Ach*—I have her now, bearing green one-six-oh. A Western Approaches destroyer. She has the white and light-green camouflage. Converted for escort work. One of the forward, one of the after guns and the torpedo tubes have been taken out of her so that she may carry more depth-charges."

"She was astern," Schwachofer volunteered.

"Then she makes her big mistake." The Kapitän's voice was gleeful. "Her Captain thinks to work out on my beam before he comes in to attack. But, Schwachofer, I shall sink him. Kunz, start the attack table."

"*Jawohl*, Herr Kapitän."

Kunz started the complicated electrical device which, when fed with the enemy's course, speed and range, would provide the angle of deflection that would enable the torpedoes to be aimed just the right amount ahead of the target so that target and torpedoes should arrive at the same place at the same time.

"Müller," the Kapitän called to the torpedo petty officer. "Prepare numbers five and six tubes; set torpedoes to run at three metres at forty knots."

"*Jawohl*, Herr Kapitän." The man disappeared aft.

"Kunz. Enemy's bearing green one-five-five, course two-four-oh. Speed one-five knots. Range eight thousand five hundred."

The hush of excitement settled on every man in the boat.

"Deflection two-five degrees left, Herr Kapitän," said Kunz. "Müller reports numbers five and six ready, Herr Kapitän."

"*Gut*." Through the periscope the Kapitän was sweeping the horizon on either side of his target. "The poor fool. He forgets that he is alone. For once—just for once—I have a British escort in my sights, and I do not have to worry whether another is about to attack me. Port ten, Coxswain, let her come round slowly. Ah—*das ist gut*—I enjoy myself. Stand by to fire. Fire six!" The boat lurched as the torpedo sped on its way.

"Torpedo running," Braun, the hydrophone operator, reported.

"Fire five!" the Kapitän ordered, and again the boat lurched.

"Torpedo running," Braun repeated.

The Kapitän, his eyes glued to the periscope, answered: "Tell me when the first fish has been running for a minute."

"*Jawohl*, Herr Kapitän."

The tense-faced men gathered round the Kapitän in the control-room saw him stiffen to rigidity, and heard an explosive "*Du lieber Gott!* He turns! He cannot see my torpedoes—but he turns under full helm."

"One minute, Herr Kapitän."

The Kapitän, watching the destroyer in the circular view of the periscope, saw that her bow was pointing directly towards him; and before he had seen the whole of her port side. She was still turning; as much of her starboard side was now visible as before there had been of the port. The target was already moving slowly to the *right* across the little black lines etched on the glass of the periscope—and the torpedoes had been fired with twenty-five degrees of *left* deflection. He had missed.

Von Stolberg whipped the periscope down. "Dive to eighty metres, Herr Oberleutnant. Silent routine. Warn Engineer Kritz that we shall be shortly attacked with depth-charges."

In the last second before he lowered his periscope the Kapitän had seen the destroyer's bows begin to turn back to starboard—towards him. The turn had not, then, been a lucky chance but a deliberately timed and carefully thought-out manœuvre. He realized for the first time that he was up against another brain—and suppose the opposing brain were better than his own?

"Asdic transmissions green one-six-five," Braun reported, spinning the polished wheel that directed the hydrophones. Before the Kapitän could acknowledge the information, he added: "Closing. Propeller noises. Probably turbines, one-five-oh revolutions."

In the silent control-room the waiting men, hardly daring to breathe, could hear the sharp zip of the asdic transmissions that struck the U-boat's hull ten seconds apart.

It was heard by them as the whisper of a whip about to be laid across their steel back.

Asdic Duel



0635, Zone Time

Wednesday, 8 September

THE *Hecate* advanced upon her quarry. Circumstances had decided her Captain that he must attack up his adversary's tail. There was no time to work out on her beam, and he did not wish to risk another torpedo attack by delaying his own too long. In any case an alert U-boat, fighting a single escort,

would nearly always present her opponent with a stern attack by continually turning away from his approach.

The Captain crossed to a conical metal table on the port side of the bridge and raised the lid to view the automatic plot below. At the moment all he could see was the head and shoulders of the navigator. "Stand back, Pilot, and let me have a look," he said.

On the deck below him the battle was laid out in coloured chalk, red for the enemy, blue for his own ship. "Echo bearing two-one-oh. Going away. Range thirteen hundred," announced the voice-pipe from the asdic cabinet.

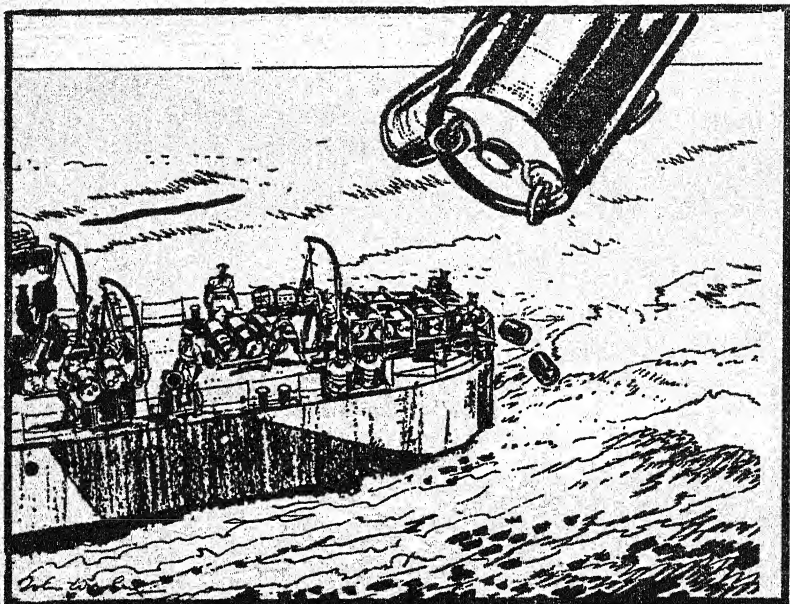
The navigator glanced up inquiringly at his Captain. "Plot it," the Captain told him, and to the First Lieutenant: "Steer two-one-oh. He certainly is wedded to that course!" He glanced again at the plot and saw that the navigator had marked up another red cross.

"Double echoes, the first at a thousand, the second at twelve hundred," the asdic voice-pipe said.

The Captain crossed to the voice-pipe. "Don't lose the further one. Try and give the plot the range of both." He went back to the plot.

"Echoes two-one-oh degrees. The first range seven hundred, the second nine hundred. First echo stationary," the navigator said.

"Thank you, Pilot," and to the asdic: "Disregard the first echo. It's a pill."



So the German thought to fox him with that old *Pillenwerfer* game. The big bubble released from a canister aboard the U-boat would temporarily give off an echo very similar to that made by a submarine. Behind this underwater smoke screen the Germans hoped to slip away. But accurate plotting had detected the device.

The *Hecate* bore down on her quarry.

"Echo bearing two-one-oh. Five hundred. Interrogative depth settings, sir?" the asdic queried.

"Set the charges to seventy-five feet. If I want to make a last-minute alteration, I may do so," the Captain replied.

In the asdic hut Hopkins, the operator, turned the dial that repeated the depth-setting order to the depth-charge party aft. That would start the ratings there in a hurried scampering to set the ten charges that were being prepared.

The *Hecate's* Captain had no idea of the depth of his enemy, who could be as much as six hundred feet below the surface, but he would

get some idea from the last asdic contact with the U-boat. The asdic beam did not go straight down: beneath the ship there was a cone of silence, the sides at an angle of sixty degrees. Within this cone the U-boat could not be detected. The farther away it was when it passed inside the cone, the deeper it must be.

"Two-one-oh; four hundred."

If only another escort was with him! Then he could break what he now guessed would be an endless series of stern attacks.

Already he half regretted his self-confident words to the Doctor the night before.

"Two-one-oh; three hundred."

He must think of the depth-charge position too. The *Hecate's* full complement of charges was one hundred and ten, of which ten charges had been spent on a previous mission. He'd got to sink the enemy in ten tries—or if not sink, then force the U-boat to the surface, so that with his guns or by ramming he could finish it off.

"Lost contact ahead, sir," said the asdic hut.

"Set charges to one fifty feet," the Captain ordered.

Hopkins spun the wheel of the repeater and pressed the buzzer that was the "Stand By" for the depth-charge firing party on the after-deck. The procedure was now automatic. No one in the *Hecate* could know what the submarine was doing, for the destroyer was passing over it. They only knew what it *had* been doing. This knowledge had been put on the instruments that would fire the charges by electrical impulses.

Two charges were automatically released from the after-rails. The depth-charge throwers barked, sending their charges wobbling through the sunlit air, two on each side, four in all. Two more pairs of death-dealing canisters rolled from her rails; already Mr. Grain, Commissioned Torpedo Gunner, was tongue-lashing his men to get the throwers reloaded and the rails refilled smartly.

High on the bridge, expectant faces peered aft. The rising sun into which they looked warmed their tanned skins. The water astern shimmered golden and was broken by the wide, dark arrow of the *Hecate's* wash.

Then came the bursting of the first charges, followed by more

surface-shaking explosions, until the watchers wondered how anything made by man could withstand the terrible shock.

The silence after the last explosions was almost palpable, and for a while men lowered their voices as in the presence of the dead.

VON STOLBERG turned to his Executive Officer. "Course and depth, Heini?"

"Course two-one-oh. Speed four knots, depth eighty metres, Herr Kapitän."

"Good. Oberleutnant von Holem," he said over his shoulder. There was no need to raise his voice in the confined quarters of the control-room.

"Herr Kapitän?" Von Holem stood stiffly to attention by the chart table, expressing all the pride of a man who considered both himself and the man to whom he offered this deference to be of a race apart.

"Otto," the Kapitän said, "let us consider the rendezvous. Where are we now?" He moved to the table.

"Here, Herr Kapitän." Diagonally across the white chart a black line was traced. There were many little crosses, very near the line. The cross to which von Holem pointed was the one nearest to the big, heavily marked circle where the line ended.

The Kapitän thought quickly. "Then we shall be in position at four o'clock tomorrow morning, with eight hours to spare."

"Provided our course and speed are maintained, Herr Kapitän."

"Yes, Otto, yes," the other answered softly. The two men looked at each other. His navigator was closer to the Kapitän than anyone else in the ship. The Kapitän's voice dropped to a whisper. "Otto, how could you have been so silly?"

He turned away wearily. For a while he had even forgotten to listen to the zip-zip of the asdic transmission. He must gather up the reins. "Stand by *Pillenwerfer*," he ordered. He did not really expect it to be effective but at least it would give him the measure of the enemy he was up against.

Müller, the torpedo petty officer, had come from aft, having secured the stern caps of the torpedo tubes. He went to the *Pillenwerfer's* release

gear and put his hand on the lever. The Kapitän signalled and Müller's hand came down. There was a slight but audible hiss as the *Pillenwerfer* was ejected from its canister. "Let me know if the range increases," von Stolberg said through the voice-pipe to Braun at the hydrophones.

They waited in tense silence. The seconds ticked by, became minutes. "Well?" the Kapitän asked.

"The range still decreases, Herr Kapitän."

Von Stolberg moved back to the centre of the control-room. To be depth-charged was no new experience for him, and he was far too clever and experienced to be caught napping.

"I will wait until the destroyer is almost above me. Then I will turn to port and double back on the reverse course, holding it for fifteen minutes. It is possible that we may shake him off. If we are successful, we will at the end of fifteen minutes alter course ninety degrees to starboard for a further forty-five minutes and then resume our course of two-one-oh degrees. That will mean"—he turned to the navigator—"that we shall end up on a parallel course three miles south-east of our present one. We shall lose almost one hour and a half. It is a great pity, but I would like to lose this fellow. He is too close to that which he should not see."

Now all in the boat could hear the throbbing beat of the destroyer's propellers.

It grew louder, like a goods train coming towards one through a tunnel.

"Port thirty. Full ahead starboard. Steady on oh-three-oh."

The waiting men felt the boat begin to turn. The hum of the engines increased. In the dark depths she began to circle and retrace her steps.

Above her, the destroyer ran on blind, to drop her charges.

"SWEEP ASTERN," the *Hecate's* Captain gave the order to the asdic cabinet.

"Sweep astern, sir," Hopkins's voice repeated.

In three minutes the *Hecate* had left the circle of disturbed water

fifteen hundred yards astern. There was still no echo that was recognizable as one that could have come from a U-boat.

Mystified and chagrined, the Captain brought his ship round to head back towards the position of the attack. The turn took a further three minutes. The U-boat, which could turn more quickly than the destroyer, was now making off at her best speed behind the curtain of disturbed water, and was already sixteen hundred yards on the other side of the disturbance and out of asdic range.

"No contact," the asdic cabinet announced.

"Carry out an all-round sweep." He had expected to find the real submarine echo coming out of the confusion of the bursting charges as a headland stands out of a fog. But his enemy had eluded him. The Captain was a very worried man.

The *Hecate* steamed back through the disturbance of her attack. The asdic beam, groping like the finger of a blind man, probed the sea around her.

"No contact, sir," the asdic hut announced.

"Try again." The Captain went to the plot and bent over it. "He's given us the slip, Pilot. I'll go to a position four miles to starboard of the attack and carry out an all-round sweep there. I'll go fast with the asdic housed."

He gave the necessary orders and the ship heeled over sharply under the impetus of the rudder and the thrust of the big propellers, now striving to work the ship's speed up to thirty knots. She vibrated all over like an excited horse. The wake began to form a long, creaming line astern.

The Captain went back to the plot. "Let me know when we are five hundred yards short of the position."

He climbed up on the plinth round the binnacle so that the cool morning wind could blow against his face. He felt tired, hungry and dispirited—but he could never show what he felt. Only nine minutes elapsed before the navigator called from the plot: "Five hundred yards to go, sir."

"One-five-oh revolutions. Steer two-one-oh degrees."

As the *Hecate's* speed fell he spoke to the asdic hut. "Lower the asdic. Commence transmission. Carry out an all-round sweep."

He went back to the view plot. "Pilot, if we have no luck this side, I'll try the other. I'm sure that he'll try and get back to his old course of two-one-oh. I think that, if he gives that up, he's almost as much a beaten man as if he'd been sunk. Lay this off for me. Give the U-boat a turn to port from the diving position; then allow for him steering a reciprocal course to his old one for fifteen minutes at six knots. Then let him turn for forty minutes to a course of one-two-oh at four knots, and then bring him back to his old two-one-oh track."

The asdic interrupted: "No contact, sir."

To the asdic: "Try again," and then, turning once more to the navigator: "I'll want a course and speed to intercept."

"Aye aye, sir." The navigator bent busily to his task, pausing every now and then to consult his slide rule.

"No contact, sir," Hopkins reported again.

"Very well. Stop transmitting. Raise the asdic." The Captain hurried back to the plot. "Ready with that course yet, Pilot?"

"One-five-two degrees at twenty-nine knots, sir."

"Good lad! Let me know when we are five hundred from the point of interception," and to the First Lieutenant: "Steer one-five-two. Two-nine-oh revolutions."

Once more the *Hecate* heeled and throbbed. As soon as she was settled to her course, the bow wave began to rise. The stern sank and a plume of white froth rose fan-like along her wake, where the terrific disturbance created by thirty thousand horse-power was dissipated in the ocean. The Captain, looking aft, saw his steward leave the after deck-house and brace himself against the roll as he hurried forward and up the long ladder to the bridge.

The Captain went to the chart table.

"Your breakfast, sir."

"Robins, how did you know that I have just fifteen minutes to eat in?" Secretly the Captain went in terror of Robins, who treated him in the same way a nannie treats her young charges. He poured a cup of coffee and hastily began to eat.

"Five hundred to go, sir." The voice came from the plot.

"Thank you, Pilot."

The Captain nodded to the First Lieutenant. "Slow her down, Number One, and bring her round to two-one-oh." Then to the asdic: "Lower asdic, commence transmission, all-round sweep."

Once more the *ping* of the asdic was heard on the bridge as the ship's speed dropped. *Ping—ping—ping—PING—PONG.*

"Good God, we're almost on top of him!"

The asdic called excitedly, "Captain, sir! Captain, sir!"

"Stop jabbering, Hopkins! I can hear it—fine on the port bow. What's the range?"

"Four hundred. Bearing one-four-oh."

"Have you time to attack?"

"Yes, sir."

"Carry on. Set charges, two hundred and fifty feet. Stand by charges."

"Range three hundred"—followed immediately by: "Lost contact ahead, sir."

The Captain pursed his lips. The whole episode was pure luck. Given that his original deduction had been correct, it was reasonable to suppose that contact would be regained somewhere within four square miles of where the *Hecate* then was. But to find himself suddenly over the U-boat was like finding a pin in a haystack by pricking himself with it.

The *Hecate* shivered as the charges exploded.

THE CHARGES from the *Hecate's* first attack had jolted the U-boat. But bursting at least a hundred feet above her, and with the centre of the pattern well on her starboard beam, they were no worse than many she had felt in previous forays.

U-121 had turned rapidly and was retracing her steps. The noise of the destroyer's propellers died away. Her men could still hear the swish of the asdic's whip, but it reached them only through the disturbed water of the explosion. Soon even this was lost to unaided ears; only Braun, the hydrophone operator, with his delicate instruments could hear the transmissions from the British ship.

"Half ahead, four knots," the Kapitän ordered when fifteen minutes had passed. "Steer one-two-oh."

The whirr of the motors eased. The boat stole stealthily forward,

suspended in a dim world above one that was darker yet—and cold as death.

Braun called the control-room on his voice-pipe. "Herr Kapitän, the British transmissions have stopped and I have heard fast but distant propellers. They are going away, Herr Kapitän."

Von Stolberg thought quickly. It seemed indeed as if he had been successful in shaking off the enemy. But why had the destroyer suddenly moved away? Either the British Captain was working some scheme of his own or something might have occurred up in the sun and air above that had drawn him off. Could it be that the *Cecilie*, cruising in the area, had unwittingly come across the destroyer? The armed German raider could certainly sink the destroyer, but she would never catch her if the latter decided to keep out of range and wireless the Admiralty for assistance.

"Time to turn to course two-one-oh, Herr Kapitän." It was the navigator speaking.

"Very well."

But was it "very well"? If he kept on his present course, towards the south-east, the chances of being found were very remote indeed. Even if the destroyer did come down that way, he would hear the transmission of her asdic long before she was close enough to detect an echo, and he would be able to avoid her. Would honour be satisfied if he steered south-east until dusk and then surfaced to go on to the rendezvous on his Diesels? If he adopted that course, he thought he could just make it in time. But it would be very very tight, and he would have nothing to spare if anything were to go wrong.

"Very well, Herr Oberleutnant. Steer two-one-oh." His mouth was compressed. To make the rendezvous was vital, both to his personal honour and to the success of the Fatherland—for the prize was colossal. He could get the photo-copies of the precious ciphers to the High Command at least fourteen days earlier than the originals brought back by the *Cecilie*. Ahead of the surface ship lay a long, dangerous and circuitous route. She would be forced to dodge backward and forward, for when sighted by another ship she must pretend to be a fast merchantman sailing independently between the American continent and the

British Isles. It would be at least five weeks before she could hope to make Bremen. He, von Stolberg, could deliver these invaluable documents in three weeks.

The Kapitän bent his face to the voice-pipe that led to the hydrophone cabinet. "Braun, can you hear anything?"

"Nothing, Herr Kapitän."

What could the Britisher be up to? He was very tempted to go to periscope depth and take a look round. If the enemy had gone, he was quite safe. If the destroyer should return at anything like the speed at which it had left, then the hydrophone would detect it when it was at least four miles away.

He gave the order and watched the needle of the depth gauge rise quickly. Once more the periscope rose smoothly from its well. Instinctively the Kapitän carried out the anti-aircraft search that years of training under North Atlantic conditions had laid down as the first protective glance on surfacing.

But neither in the sky above nor on the surface could he see anything. The thought crossed the Kapitän's mind that he might surface and try to run away on the Diesels. At best such a course might lead to his escape; at worst, even if the destroyer returned, he would have had some chance to recharge the batteries and refresh the air in the boat.

"Prepare to surface."

"Herr Kapitän, Herr Kapitän!" It was Braun's voice from the hydrophone cabinet.

"Find out what it is, Otto." His eyes were still glued to the periscope.

"Herr Kapitän, Braun reports high-speed propellers, distant, getting nearer."

The Kapitän left the periscope and pushed past von Holem to the tube.

"How fast, Braun, and what bearing?"

"Very fast indeed, Herr Kapitän, on the starboard beam."

Back at the periscope, von Stolberg swung it round to the starboard bearing. In the centre of the horizon two white plumes of water were visible. Between them swayed the destroyer's delicate mast and pale-grey upper-works. It was useless to try to fire torpedoes at a destroyer

travelling at that speed. Angrily he pushed the button that sent the periscope down into its well.

"Emergency dive to eighty metres."

The boat dipped steeply by the bow, and the engine hum increased. Schwachofer was flooding the forward tanks first in order to increase the angle of dive and send her hurtling into the depths. The valves would be shut off in turn so that she would steady up on an even keel. The officer was—and had to be—an artist at catching her in her dizzy plunge downward; one false move on his part and she would go on down to a depth that would crush even her strong hull.

With one hand grasping the now-housed periscope to steady himself, von Stolberg swore softly to himself. How the devil could you fight a madman like this Englishman?

"Can you hear any asdic transmissions?" he asked Braun.

"No, Herr Kapitän."

That seemed reasonable, for what he knew of the Allied asdic assured him that it could not be used above certain speeds. What then was in the British Captain's mind?

The boat was levelling off, and her motors were eased back to give her four knots now that they have driven her down.

"Silent routine," he gave the order. This would put the hydroplanes, which like horizontal rudders controlled her depth, into hand control, so that the motors that worked them at other times would not add to the noise.

All in the boat could now hear the drumming of the destroyer's propellers, ever growing in volume. Louder and louder it grew, until the ear, accustomed to the continually increasing racket, was shocked to hear the noise decreasing. Could she have passed beyond them and be going away? The noise still came from the starboard beam, but it was fading.

And then, with a crack that made even the most hardened and experienced stiffen, the asdic's lash fell on the iron shell that contained them.

An agonized whisper swept through the boat as the men simultaneously released their breaths.

Du lieber Gott, the Kapitän thought. On my quarter at four hundred metres. If he attacks now, he has a chance to sink me.

"Hard-a-starboard—full ahead. Steer two-eight-oh." If I pass under him, show him my stern, he may not have time to prepare his attack.

The beat of propellers sounded overhead. His men instinctively bent their heads. Seconds ticked by. Then came the rumbling note of a depth-charge—near enough in all conscience. If only it was no worse.

But it was! The *Hecate's* starboard throwers had hurled two charges fifty yards to one side of her track. The heavy one, sinking more quickly than the light one, exploded beneath the U-boat. The light one exploded above her, and the shock wave between the two was appalling in intensity. It felt as if the boat had been picked up by a giant hand and thrown upon a concrete floor. Every single thing in her was flung up and down by the repeated waves. The lights went out, and in the semi-darkness the emergency lights, no bigger than torch bulbs, cast an eerie glow. The floor was littered with tiny fragments of shattered glass. A frost-like mantle was all that remained of the glass fronts on the hundreds of dials in the control-room.

The boat heaved and porpoised through the depths while Schwachofer and his aides struggled desperately to regain control of her. Panting, with sweat pouring from their bodies, her crew fought for her life and theirs.

WHEN HER exploding depth-charges had ceased to deafen the asdic, the *Hecate's* Captain heard the joyful report, "Contact astern. Bearing green one-seven-oh. Range five hundred. Opening fast."

With both contestants moving in opposite directions, the range would increase at over six hundred yards a minute. It was therefore imperative to turn the destroyer to the opposite course without delay.

"Starboard thirty, steer three-oh-oh," the Captain ordered.

The *Hecate* heeled sharply. Her stern, swinging round in a great arc, crossed out every ripple on the sea and left it smooth as satin on the inside of the turn.

The asdic steadily reported the changing bearings.

"Midships. Steady on three-oh-oh."

"Red oh-five," the asdic said. "Bearing two-nine-five. Range seventeen hundred. Submarine. Going away."

The Captain realized that he had turned barely in time. A minute or two more and the U-boat would have been free again. He crossed to the view plot. "What did it look like, Pilot?"

"If the depth was anywhere near right, the starboard thrower should have given him a nasty shaking, sir."

"Let's give him one more while he's feeling shaky. Only eight patterns left—that's the real rub."

Rolling heavily, the swell on her beam, the destroyer carried out her third attack. Seven patterns—seventy charges—were left.

"Contact astern bearing one-five-oh, range five hundred."

A mercy that at any rate they were still in contact. As usual the Captain went to the view plot. "Well, Pilot?"

"The U-boat turned to port at the last moment, sir. He's back on his two-one-oh course, or I'm much mistaken."

"What a fool I am! Of course! I should have kept out on his port side. That pattern won't have hurt him much."

What to do? To continue attacking this wily bird until all his ammunition was exhausted or to lay astern of him and just hold contact while he thought things over?

He went to the compass platform. "All right, Number One. I'll take her while you have breakfast. I'm going to take station half a mile astern of him."

The *Hecate* settled down to wait, like a great dog at the bottom of a tree. The U-boat plodded on her course of two-one-oh degrees. Astern of her, with slow speed on her engines, lazily wallowed the destroyer, her men basking in the sunshine and going to their breakfast in watches. The bridge sweepers appeared and swept away the night's litter of cigarette papers, the wrappers of chocolate bars, and the extraordinary amount of real dust that can accumulate on the open bridge in the middle of the Atlantic. Every five minutes the asdic cabinet reported the range and bearing: "Bearing two-one-oh, range one thousand."

The Captain went below for a shave. When he came back to the bridge he noticed the tidy atmosphere at once. "Well done, Number

One. She looks a bit more like our *Hecate* now. I want you to collect the Pilot, the coxswain, the senior asdic rating and Mr. Grain up here. I think we'll have a little conference."

The Captain addressed the men who had gathered in a sheltered corner of the bridge. "We've already expended a third of our depth-charges, and the U-boat need not surface for twenty-four hours, when his air will be exhausted. I've got seven patterns left. We'll attack him half an hour before the end of each watch, the last time at dawn to-morrow; if I can't break his hull, at least I hope to shatter his nerve when he tumbles to what we've got in store for him. Now that's a long battle and you can't all keep at it all the time. So I want you to go somewhere comfortable near your own particular part of the ship, and sit down and rest."

The *Hecate* replaced her sword in the sheath, but she kept her right hand firmly on the hilt.

IN THE dim light von Stolberg peered over Schwachofer's shoulder. "What depth?" he asked.

"Hundred and ten—all the tanks are working correctly."

"Keep her steady at a hundred and ten until we've checked on the damage. If there is nothing serious I'll go deep to a hundred and fifty metres."

Already the electricians were hurrying round the boat replacing the broken bulbs and a blown fuse on the main switchboard. The lights came on again, and the full extent of the ordeal through which the boat had passed could be seen and assessed. Great strips of cork insulation had been stripped from the plating and hung festooned among the pipes and valves that surrounded the control-room; there was not a gauge glass that had not been shattered, and there were broken shards even on the bodies of the crew. Von Stolberg, turning sharply from the depth gauge, slipped on the glass-strewn deck.

"Get this mess swept up," he said to Kunz.

Slowly the Kapitän felt his nerves relax. The attack was the most devastating blow that he had ever felt in his three years in the submarine service. If the depth-charges had exploded six feet, even three feet closer, mortal damage would surely have been done.

He went to the door of the hydrophone cabinet and looked in. "Your ears were not damaged, Braun?" he asked.

"No, Herr Kapitän. I had removed the headphones."

"That is good." Hydrophone operators could have their hearing seriously impaired, for their instrument greatly magnified all sounds in the water. "Can you hear anything?"

"Ja, Herr Kapitän. The destroyer is in contact astern. It is difficult to tell her range because she is blanketed by our own propellers, but I fancy she comes closer."

The Kapitän turned to find Otto Kritz, the engineer, waiting for him. "Well?"

"No material damage, Herr Kapitän."

The Kapitän turned to Schwachofer. "Take her down to one hundred and fifty." It was unlikely that the British ship was aware of the near success of her last attack since the oil tanks, which if punctured would at once leak oil to the surface, were undamaged. However,



the deeper he went, the larger his margin of safety would be. Depth-charges took three times as long to sink to four hundred feet as to two hundred because the water was denser at the lower level. In this type of U-boat, however, he did not dare go lower: even at one hundred and fifty metres he creaked alarmingly.

Braun was calling. "Destroyer astern—closing rapidly."

The propeller beat could now be heard in the boat. Von Stolberg listened carefully. "What is your depth?"

"Just coming to one hundred and fifty, Herr Kapitän."

"Good." Then to the quartermaster: "Port twenty, steer two-one-oh."

Breathlessly the crew waited. The rumbling detonations sounded above them. One bulb went out. There was nothing more.

"He fires too shallow," von Stolberg said, and a cracked smile twisted his lips—his first that day. The other officers noticed it and felt relief.

Schwachofer broke the silence. "Herr Kapitän, breakfast for the men?"

"Yes, of course. Have some food passed round, but nothing heated. We must conserve electricity."

Very soon tins of sardines and biscuits smeared with butter were being passed round the boat. The food at once assumed the taste of Diesel oil, mould and sweat. The atmosphere was already becoming foul by ordinary standards and the boat sweated terribly. Clothes would not dry, and leather garments mildewed and added to the unmistakable U-boat smell. The men accepted the smell: it was part of their arduous duty.

Von Stolberg, stuffing a sardine into his mouth, called down the voice-pipe to the hydrophone cabinet. "Well?"

"Enemy transmissions on our beam, drawing aft. I think he's going astern of us again, Herr Kapitän. His engines are turning very slowly."

The Kapitän finished his breakfast and asked again: "Well?"

"Still astern of us, Herr Kapitän. He's just sitting on our tail at the same course and speed."

"*Zum Teufel*," the Kapitän murmured. What was the mad Britisher up to now, trailing him as a detective trails a criminal? Suppose the destroyer should stay there all day and all night too? The U-boat would have to surface about six o'clock tomorrow, her endurance exhausted.

And the *Cecilie*? Was the destroyer going to come all the way with him to his rendezvous? Had she, perhaps twelve hours ago, told the British Admiralty that there was a U-boat in the area? Naval information said that the British always made a sighting report immediately they had an enemy contact; thereafter they kept wireless silence unless they achieved a victory. But the message would have contained a geographical position at least one hundred and fifty miles away to the north-east, and over two hundred miles from his rendezvous with the *Cecilie*. There was no possible chance that the report would bring a hornets' nest about the ears of the ship he was going to meet. And if he could not sink the destroyer himself, he was sure that the *Cecilie* would be only too pleased to do so when she arrived.

At half past ten he spoke again. "Braun, where is she now?"

"Just the same, Herr Kapitän, coming slowly along behind us."

"I am going to see if he is asleep or not. Possibly some instrument is broken, and he waits while his men mend it. I am going to turn ninety degrees to port. I want to know if he follows me or not—you understand?"

"I understand, Herr Kapitän."

Von Stolberg went back to the control-room. "Alter course to one-two-oh degrees."

He tried to appear nonchalant while waiting, but so great was the effort that he was forced to give it up and go back to the hydrophone cabinet. There was a repeater from the gyro-compass on the bulkhead above the complicated instruments. Looking at it, he saw it steadying on the new course. "Well, Braun?"

"He is still there, Herr Kapitän, as before."

Von Stolberg felt the hair on the back of his head rising. He smoothed his hand over his close-cropped head and retraced his steps to the control-room. It was possible that another turn might yet catch his tracker unawares. "Alter course back to two-one-oh."

But the destroyer followed him round as confidently as before. There was evidently nothing the matter with her instruments, and this unwelcome knowledge was the only gain to set against the waste of a further fifteen minutes.

THE *Hecate*, barely making steerage-way through the glittering tropical waves, followed the enemy below. Lulled by the gentle motion, the sailors basked in the sun. Flying fish broke from the blue waters. A few small clouds chased themselves in a circle round the horizon.

The Doctor joined the Captain on the bridge, and they fell to discussing the pursuit.

"If I can keep on his tail," the Captain said, "he'll have to come up, whether I blow him to the surface or just wait. I admit it's a bit of a strain on the asdic team and the plot. But we've got a damn' good crowd."

"I'd like to see him blown up, please."

"What a bloodthirsty fellow you are. I'd much rather catch him alive. He's obviously going somewhere important to the German war effort. My job is to jam it sooner or later, and I'd just as soon have it later because we might be able to learn what he's after. We have already accompanied him for one hundred and fifty miles since I took your unguarded queen."

"Don't remind me."

"Want your revenge?"

"What—now?"

"I don't see why not. Go and get the board."

So the Captain and the Doctor sat down on the platform round the standard compass, and the chessmen were set out.

The bell from the asdic hut buzzed. The Captain was at the voice-pipe in one bound. "Forebridge."

"Submarine altering course, sir. Bearing red one-oh. Range decreasing."

"Port twenty," the Captain called to the wheel-house.

"Target still drawing left, sir. Red four-oh."

The submarine, half a mile ahead and turning, was forty-five degrees

on the bow. As the destroyer came round after her, the target would draw ahead once more.

"Bearing now?" the Captain asked.

"Bearing steadying." A pause, and then: "Bearing drawing right. Red three-five."

The *Hecate* was swinging more quickly now. The bearings came down steadily. Red two-oh. Red one-five. Fine on the port bow.

"Midships," the Captain ordered, "how's her head, Number One?"

"One-two-five, sir."

"He's done a ninety-degree turn to port. Steer one-two-oh."

"Aye aye, sir."

"I bet it's just a wiggle to see if he can shake us off. He'll be turning back as soon as he finds out we're still behind him."

"Forebridge," from the asdic. "Submarine altering course—drawing right."

"Starboard twenty," the Captain said.

Dutifully the *Hecate* turned back to two-one-oh following the submarine. The Captain reseated himself before the board. "Your move, Doctor."

The sun still shone and the *Hecate* ambled after her prey. And so the forenoon wore on.

At half past eleven the *Hecate* drew her sword again. The Captain explained his plan to the team. "I'm going to steam over her to get some idea of depth. Probably he'll think I'm attacking and he'll turn to port or starboard. When I come round again I will attack, but because I fancy he's wedded to this course of two-one-oh I think he'll turn back to it. So I'll keep that side of him. We might get him that way, because he'll turn into the pattern. Now get to your stations."

Shivering in every fibre of her slim body, the *Hecate's* speed increased. One run over the target provided an estimated depth of four hundred feet. The U-boat turned to starboard. The *Hecate*, swinging round and attacking up her enemy's stern, kept, as near as could be judged, seventy-five yards on her port bow, in order to catch her returning to her old course. The charges were fired and the Captain went to the view plot.

"Contact astern, green one-six-oh. Range four hundred—double echoes," announced the asdic.

The bearing and range at once suggested to the Captain that his enemy had double-bluffed him. Instead of turning to port and directly back to his course, he had turned a complete circle to starboard, and would have been far away from the bursting charges. The normal procedure would have been for the *Hecate* to turn to starboard too, but if he turned the other way and went straight for the target there was a possibility of having a beam-on shot at the U-boat instead of this wretched creeping-up-the-tail business. The double echoes almost certainly suggested that one was the U-boat and the other her wake.

"Port thirty."

The *Hecate* swung round. The target was on the port bow, the bearing steady. The Captain had not meant to fire another pattern so soon: after this one, he would have only fifty charges left. At the last moment before firing he had the instinctive feeling that the U-boat, surprised, was trying to take some violent evasive action—but he could not be certain. She was still there after the attack. Still on her course of two-one-oh.

The plot when consulted suggested that the firing of the charges had been a little late to be fully effective, and that with a crossing target they had passed too far ahead of the enemy. But it did suggest that the charges from the port thrower could have hit the enemy full on the nose.

Dutifully the *Hecate* took station astern of her quarry once more.

THE BRITISH Captain was quite right. Von Stolberg had tried a double bluff. To avoid the first pattern, he had turned a full circle to starboard, and he had expected the *Hecate* to follow him round. Braun's anxious report, "Destroyer approaching from before the starboard beam," had taken him so completely by surprise that his immediate reaction was to think Braun's report wrong. Three precious minutes were lost while the German confirmed his worst fears, so that his only remaining course was to turn towards the enemy, in the expectation that the destroyer would have anticipated his turning away, and she would then fire late rather than early.

"Starboard thirty," he ordered.

A minute later the second set of charges began to explode. This time they were correctly set for depth—that much was apparent. White-faced, with beads of perspiration on his forehead, the German waited. Then there was a shattering explosion that felt as though the boat had run her nose into a rock. Those of her crew that were standing were flung forward, clutching desperately at anything that they could. Although the main fuses remained intact, all the lights in the forepart of the ship were broken once again. Since, by her shape, the boat was best able to stand a shock from ahead, she had suffered far less than if the explosion had been on the beam or beneath her. What her crew could not know was that the shock had damaged the delicate mechanism in at least two of the torpedoes in her forward tubes.

Von Stolberg was coldly furious, and basically his anger was directed at himself. He had made a mistake, and the effect had nearly been disastrous. The three lost minutes had proved to be of paramount importance. The cold rage that possessed him made him determine to sink his adversary. But to do that he must come up from the depths. The destroyer, Braun informed him, had taken station astern once more. He supposed she was enjoying an interval for lunch: it was just the sort of crazy action he would expect from this particular ship. Already he was forming a very clear mental picture of the character of his foe. She was efficient, sometimes brilliantly so; but at the same time he had a feeling that she could be tricked by cunning. She was no plodder, but an improviser. Surely Germanic thoroughness should be able to defeat British originality?

He bent over the attack table and called to Schwachofer to help him.

"The Britisher must be sunk. We will assume that we have gone up to twenty metres, from where we can fire our torpedoes. Then what happens? The destroyer will decide to attack. It will first pass over us without dropping charges as it did just now, probably to ascertain our depth. We will turn, shall we say, to starboard. The destroyer will turn the same way as we turn, and at a range of about one thousand metres. Very well. We will fire a spread of four angled torpedoes. Let us work it out, Schwachofer. There, you see. One hundred, ninety, eighty, and

seventy degrees angling. He will be beam-on to us, and one torpedo at least is bound to hit. With luck, two torpedoes."

"But first we must come to twenty metres."

"I think the British Captain has his lunch now. I know it will not be easy to blow the tanks without making so much noise that the destroyer will hear. But I do not ask you to carry out this delicate manoeuvre in twenty minutes. I give you one whole hour—perhaps more."

"I will do my best, Herr Kapitän. Shall I start blowing now?"

"Yes—very gently. Müller," the Kapitän called. "When we reach twenty metres prepare the four forward tubes for firing."

"How long shall I have, Herr Kapitän?"

"How the devil should I know? When the accursed destroyer attacks, I shall require them immediately."

Müller scuttled forward. The Kapitän was in a bad temper and he was thankful to be out of the way.

Slowly, stealthily, *U-121* rose from the depths. In an hour and a quarter she was at twenty metres. It was then fifteen minutes past one, but she had to wait for a further two and a quarter hours before her intended prey made any move.

The atmosphere in the boat by that time was becoming foul—all of the air had already been through some man's lungs—and they had only been submerged for some nine hours. Men began sneaking to their lockers for a tablet of pervitin or caffenin to stave off the awful soporific effect.

At last Braun made the long-awaited report. "Enemy speed increasing."

They could hear her moving up now, very close above their heads at this lesser depth.

The roar of the propellers reached a climax.

"Starboard thirty," von Stolberg ordered. "Course three-oh-oh. Stand by tubes one to four. Oberleutnant von Holem, take charge of the attack table. Target red nine-oh. Speed one-five knots. Range one thousand metres. Torpedo speed forty knots. Depth five metres."

"Attack table lined up," von Holem replied, making the switch that connected the table to the gyro-compass.

"Follow attack table," the Kapitän ordered the forward torpedo room. The constantly changing firing settings were thus transmitted automatically to the torpedoes and set on their firing mechanisms.

Von Holem was watching the Kapitän, who in turn was watching the gyro-compass. The Kapitän nodded. The boat lurched.

"Torpedo running," Braun announced.

The boat lurched again.

"Torpedo running."

A third lurch. Silence. Every man in the control-room waited.

"Torpedo not running," Braun said.

The Kapitän swore under his breath and the men swore aloud. The boat lurched again as the fourth torpedo left the tube.

"Torpedo running," and then in an excited cry: "Herr Kapitän, I'm getting torpedo hydrophone effect on the starboard beam. Bearing growing aft."

"Himmel! A rogue torpedo." To Schwachofer: "Emergency dive to one hundred metres."

The damaged gyro of the second torpedo had set it circling—more of a danger to the U-boat than ever it would be to the destroyer. A fractured pipe in the engine of the third torpedo had prevented its starting at all. The deadly weapon was sinking harmlessly into the depths below. Only numbers one and four were running correctly.

Mopping the sweat from their foreheads, the men of *U-121* took her back into the depths.

THE SUN, that had been so welcome in the freshness of morning, now beat down mercilessly on the *Hecate's* unprotected bridge. Within its circumference there was only one spot of shade—at the front of the bridge, where there was a narrow chart-house. The air within this space was unbearably hot, but the sun rays could not strike into it directly; and it was in there that the Captain sat on the deck, using a duffle coat as a cushion. He had no qualms in seeking as much physical comfort as he could, for the rapid functioning of his own brain was as much a part of his ship's armament as the depth-charges themselves.

As far as he could be certain, his attacks had achieved no result at all,

and he had now only fifty depth-charges left. He looked at his watch. Three o'clock. In nine hours he had used half his available ammunition, and it was quite possible that the underwater battle would go on until the following dawn.

He yawned and wished for the cool of the evening. The steady *ping* of the asdic, with its satisfactory *pong*, told that the target was still held, but it had an immensely soporific effect. His head felt heavy and his eyes closed, fluttered, and closed again. It was pleasant to imagine himself back in an English garden, with sunlight filtering through the trees. His wife was there, and the children, and the rabbit in the wire pen labelled "Daisy's End." Possibly there were many other little Daisies by now.

"Captain, sir." It was his First Lieutenant's voice.

"Yes, Number One?"

"Five minutes to fifteen thirty, sir."

"Thank you." He rose slowly and went out into the sun. "Tell the depth-charge parties to stand by, and warn the engine-room." He turned to look at the empty sea ahead as the *Hecate*, gathering speed, crept up on her quarry. He was surprised by the asdic report that the U-boat was so near the surface. "Artful blighter," he remarked when it was plain that the enemy had turned to starboard as he had swept over her. Very well, he'd turn to starboard too. It would force the German to go full circle again and he might, by bluff, be able to get across him once more. Also, since the sub was shallow, there was less chance of error in the depth-charge settings. They might even blow her to the surface and a glimpse of a grey hull among the exploding depth-charges would be a rewarding sight.

The *Hecate* was turning now, parallel to the U-boat's new course. "High-speed hydrophone effect," Hopkins's voice reached him, together with a clattering roar from the bridge loudspeaker that grew louder each second.

So that was what the fellow was doing at a shallow depth—firing angled torpedoes by instruments! There was only one course open: turn bows towards the U-boat in order to make the target as small as possible.

"Starboard thirty. Half-astern starboard engine. Full ahead, port."

But with a running time of only a fraction over a minute, the torpedoes would probably arrive before his ship had begun to answer his command.

The First Lieutenant had jumped on to the platform of the starboard signal lamp. The Captain had leapt to the platform on the opposite side. The ship vibrated wildly as her starboard engine began to run astern and her port one full ahead. Her bows were swinging rapidly over the sea, hauled round by thirty thousand horse-power.

"Torpedo passing clear on the starboard bow," the first Lieutenant's shout reached the Captain's ears. A moment later he saw the undulating wake of the second as it appeared across the bows going away to port. Between the two that they had seen, there should have been two more—and they would have torn out the vitals of his ship. Where were they?

"Half-ahead both—one-five-oh revolutions. Asdic hut, range and bearing of target, please."

The *Hecate* swept into attack once more, but her charges, set to kill the U-boat at torpedo-firing depth, did little more than annoy it; for it was already plunging downward.

"So he tried to kipper us?" It was the Doctor speaking.

"He did indeed," the Captain answered. "And we were very lucky. My bet is that he fired his four bow tubes and the two centre ones failed to run because of the hammering we've given him."

"When are you going to attack again, sir?"

"Unless anything fresh happens, at seven thirty, eleven thirty, and three thirty—and the last one at dawn tomorrow. I've only four patterns left."

"He'll begin to hate you."

"I expect he does that already."

VON STOLBERG did indeed hate the Captain of the destroyer that was persecuting him, particularly because he had just noticed that both the attack at midday and the last one had been made just half an hour before the watch would normally be changed.

The thought that the Britisher was timing his attacks at regular intervals drove the German frantic. It made what would otherwise have

been a respite into nothing but an agonizingly drawn-out prelude to the next attack.

Did this give him time to reload? If the hypothesis was correct, then he would have the necessary quiet period. But he could never be quite certain. What ill fate had put this bloody man on his trail? Driven deep, the sting of his torpedoes drawn, the air getting fouler every hour, and his batteries running low, von Stolberg knew himself to be in his tightest corner yet.

Up above them the sun would be setting in the west. Perhaps in the dark the destroyer would lose contact—for her men must be as weary as his own. When next the destroyer attacked he would use his last two remaining *Pillenwerfer* and see if he could slip away before the tired men in the destroyer were aware of his escape.

Schwachofer moved from the corner, where he had been resting weary legs by leaning against the bulkhead.

"Herr Kapitän, shall I warn the hydrophone cabinet?"

"Of what?" Von Stolberg spun round.

Schwachofer looked down at the watch on his wrist. "That the enemy may attack, Herr Kapitän."

The knowledge that others had detected a pattern in the action of his enemy only added fire to the Kapitän's anger. The whole boat would have the jitters if he were not careful. He looked his burly junior coldly in the eye. "I see no reason to suspect any particular time of attack. Such a supposition would be highly dangerous and, Herr Oberleutnant, very bad for morale."

"Herr Kapitän," the voice from the hydrophone cabinet called, "The destroyer is increasing speed." The operator, Braun, sounded desperately weary.

"Müller, stand by *Pillenwerfer*."

Schwachofer turned away to face the big depth-recording dial. He smiled a little ruefully to himself. In von Stolberg's cold blue eyes he had detected both the anger and the lie.

The *U-121* turned to port as the destroyer passed above her. And to port again as she ran in a second time.

"Release two *Pillenwerfer*."

They were gone—his last attempt to muddle and defeat the enemy. The two bubbling cones hung in his wake.

Braun's voice again: "Destroyer reducing speed, Herr Kapitän."

Were they going to creep away? The whisper of the asdic lash on the hull seemed less. But that could be just their own imagining—or possibly the blanketing effect of the *Pillenwerfer*.

Swish—swish—the lash never left them. It grew stronger again as the destroyer followed them through the disturbed water—following them into the clear sea beyond.

There was not a man in the boat whose face was not set and grim.

"Destroyer attacking," Braun announced.

ALL THROUGH the night the *Hecate* hung on to her adversary. Cups of steaming cocoa were carried round to her men, who were lying down, huddled in duffle coats or oilskins, alongside the weapons they served. Three times during the night they had attacked. Now only one pattern of depth-charges remained.

The first hint of dawn showed in the east as the navigator climbed the ladder to the bridge carrying his sextant.

"Morning stars?" the Captain asked, stirring stiffly.

"Yes, sir."

"I wonder if we ought to push out another signal?" The Captain was thinking aloud. "We're almost a hundred miles from the position we reported at dawn yesterday."

Yeoman Willis appeared as if by magic at the Captain's elbow. He had a nose for a signal as sensitive as that of any retriever for a fallen bird. "You wish to make a signal, sir?"

In spite of the tiredness that almost overwhelmed him, the Captain laughed. "Willis, I was considering the possibility—only considering. Don't look so disappointed: I think I will do it. After the next attack make to Admiralty, repeated C-in-C, South Atlantic: *Still in contact. Enemy course unaltered. Depth-charges expended*, and get the position from the navigator."

"Aye aye, sir."

Navigator and yeoman went down the ladder. The Captain called

after them: "Pilot, let me know as soon as you've got a position." He turned to receive hot cocoa from the bo'sun's mate. "Gosh—this is good. Feeling tired, Number One?"

"Not so bad as I might be, sir." The officer was holding his chilled hands round his warm cup.

"Neither am I. I seem to have got my second wind. Just a tight feeling round my head as if my cap was too small, and a terrific heat under my eyelids when I shut them."

"How much longer will it go on, sir?"

"No one can tell. But if I were the U-boat commander I'd try my cannon. After all, he's a terribly small target for us, and our semi-armour-piercing shells will just bounce off his inch-thick pressure hull. He's got a target ten times as big to aim at, and the whole area is to some extent vulnerable—a destroyer is so packed with stuff that she can hardly take any damage without losing some important part of her fighting efficiency."

"Forebridge." The voice came from the plot.

"Yes, Pilot?" the Captain answered. "What was the position?"

"Five north, thirty-two west."

"Exactly?"

"As near as can be, sir."

"Sounds just the sort of place their staff office might pick for a rendezvous—I wonder if we have arrived. Dear, oh, dear, the Herr Hun will be cross if we've tagged along to his trysting place. Let's attack him now. I'm not going to carry out a dummy run this time. I'm just going straight in to attack with four hundred and fifty feet on the charges. We may catch him napping, particularly as he won't be expecting us for another hour. Tally-ho, chaps. Range and bearing, Mr. Hopkins, please?"

NIGHT in the *U-121* had appeared interminable, for each of the destroyer's attacks had seemed like gigantic guns that spoke of doom. At midnight, they had put on anti-carbon-monoxide masks, but the discomfort of wearing them for such a long period had proved almost as trying to their tempers as the deadly gas would have been to their

bodies. Only von Stolberg, by exercise of his own fierce self-control, still held his fraying crew together.

Hour by hour little crosses had been pencilled on the chart—each one nearer than the one before to the circle that denoted the rendezvous. The last, at six o'clock, had actually lain within the prescribed area. Whatever damage the destroyer had done, she had failed to prevent *U-121* from arriving at her rendezvous with six hours to spare.

"*Achtung.*" Von Stolberg spoke over the loudspeaker system. "We have made our rendezvous. At noon the German cruiser *Cecilie* will join us and drive off the accursed destroyer. We have been successful in this. We shall be successful in the rest."

"Destroyer increasing speed," Braun reported.

Perhaps Braun had been a little slow in detecting the increase in the beat of the destroyer's propellers. Perhaps the Kapitän had become so used to the feint run that the destroyer had made as a prelude to each attack that he delayed giving the order to turn. Whatever the cause, the submarine had barely started to turn when the destroyer passed overhead.

Von Stolberg realized at once that somewhere their corporate reflex had been slow, and he determined that when the real attack came, after this usual dummy run, they must do better.

But the attack came at once, and the bursting of the first two charges astern of the U-boat took the Kapitän entirely by surprise. Four charges went off almost simultaneously; two on either side, above and below him.

In the toils of the enormous pressure waves, *U-121* was turned and twisted like a maddened fish. With her men again plunged into the near darkness of the emergency lighting, she would have hurtled to the bottom except for Schwachofer's skill at the diving controls.

His art and the fantastic luck that put her exactly in the middle of the destroyer's pattern had, by a miracle, saved her hull from being utterly crushed.

Inside, the boat was a shambles.

Fittings and pipes had been wrenched from their clips, and men lay in heaps where they had fallen. In the control-room there appeared in

the semi-darkness a thing that hopped and screamed. About the size of a small dog, it ran into a corner where it began to leap up and down, emitting a high-pitched wail. Horrified, the men stared, and even von Stolberg was shaken. He clung to the periscope standard and looked at the apparition.

"It's the gyro-compass, broken adrift." Schwachofer, the imperturbable, had guessed correctly. The gyro ring had been broken, and the gyro wheel, revolving at ten thousand revolutions, had gone careering through the boat.

Von Stolberg's eyes rose to meet those of his Executive Officer. He looked utterly dazed.

"Surface," he gasped.

The Engineer Officer stumbled into the control-room, coughing terribly.

"Chlorine. Sea water leaking into number-two battery."

Von Stolberg pulled himself together and nodded. "We're going up. Be ready to start the Diesels, Herr Engineer."

"You will never start them, Herr Kapitän. Perhaps you may go for a little longer on the batteries when you reach the surface. I do not know; but already some of the cells are boiling."

Von Stolberg took this further blow with stoical calm. "We shall go back to Germany in the *Cecilie*." And to von Holem: "Have your gun crew ready and open fire as soon as you can. I will fight him and sink him yet. He is a much bigger target than we are."

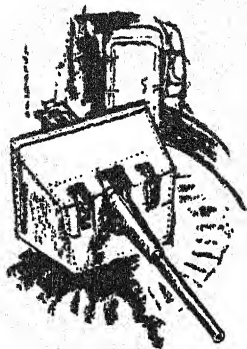
With the thought of seeing the light of day again the morale of the men was reviving, driving away the heaviness engendered by foul air and lack of sleep. Some would be seasick as soon as the clean air entered their lungs, but the gun crew would probably find that excitement would overcome their disability.

"Twenty metres," Schwachofer reported. The gun crew were already clustered at the foot of the ladder.

"Ten metres."

The gun-layer sprang up the iron rungs, throwing his weight on the wheel that retained the heavy hatch. Worked by its big spring, the hatch was raised, and the gun crew poured out of it.

Gun Battle



0632, Zone Time
Thursday, 9 September

THE *Hecate's* wake lay curled in a great circle as she turned after her attack. The inquisitive sun was just peeping over the misty horizon as the ship's head turned to the eastward.

A cry came up to the Captain from the asdic cabinet. "Forebridge. I think the U-boat's blowing her tanks, sir."

"Thank you, Mr. Hopkins, keep passing me the range and bearing." Then to the First Lieutenant: "Action stations, Number One. We must have a reception committee for him."

The sound of the alarms rattled through the ship. Her crew was almost instantly ready: the *Hecate* had had her hand on the hilt of her sword for twenty-four hours. She had only to draw it.

The asdic was speaking again. "Bearing green six-oh. Broad on the starboard bow."

"Guns," the Captain spoke to the Gunnery Officer, "bring your guns to the ready. Submarine expected to surface about green six-oh."

"Aye aye, sir."

From the asdic: "Lost contact, sir."

The yeoman appeared at his elbow. "Message passed, sir."

"Thank you, Yeoman."

Anxiously the men of the destroyer waited for sight of their quarry. They thought it likely that she would be so damaged that her men would at once abandon ship, or be induced to do so after a short gun engagement. Even the Captain was perhaps not yet fully alive to the difference between forcing a U-boat to the surface on the edge of a convoy where help was available, and doing the same in the middle of the ocean where he was all alone.

"U-boat surfacing!" The cry went up from many throats.

"Permission to open fire, sir?" the Gunnery Officer asked.

"Not yet, Guns. Let's see if they start abandoning ship. I don't like firing on survivors. Yeoman, make 'abandon' to them very slowly with the light."

Willis sprang to the ten-inch signal lamp and began to flap the shutter, *clack-clack*. It was the only sound that the tense watchers on the bridge could hear.

"There they come, sir," the First Lieutenant cried excitedly.

Little figures could be seen pouring out of the conning tower. The U-boat was lying at an angle away from the destroyer, and moving steadily into the scintillating, brilliant path that the sun laid across the ocean, dazzling the men in the *Hecate*. A vaporous cloud of yellow-green smoke was pouring out of the U-boat's stern.

"Damn this sun," the Captain said.

"Target—a submarine. Bearing green five-five. All guns load, semi-armour-piercing shell." The Gunnery Officer was carrying out the routine drill.

"*Clack-clack-clack*—" The ten-inch signal projector started the word "abandon" again. "*Clack-ety-clack-ety-ety*—"

"B gun ready."

"There's a hell of a lot of smoke from her." The Captain spoke.

"X gun ready."

"Salvos. Range nine hundred," the Gunnery Officer said.

The sun, and the haze that billowed from the stern of their target, momentarily hid the U-boat from definite view. A flash of orange in the haze—and before the destroyer's bow a plume of water rose where a U-boat shell had fallen close alongside.

"Fire," the Captain snapped.

"Shoot," the Gunnery Officer repeated into the curved mouthpiece that hung on his chest.

The *Hecate* shook to the dual crash as both the 4-7 guns fired within a split second of each other. Watching through steady binoculars the Gunnery Officer saw the shells land just over the target. "Down one hundred, shoot," he ordered.

The other officers were leaning over the starboard side of the bridge looking down at their own vessel's side. Somewhere under the curve of the bow an enemy shell had hit with a ship-shaking explosion. Clouds of acrid smoke were already eddying from the open ammunition hatch of B gun.

"Quick, Number One! Get down below and see what the damage is. I'll take her," the Captain said.

The First Lieutenant hurried from the bridge.

The guns fired again. A flash of orange that was not the U-boat's gun flared momentarily in the smoke.

"Nice shooting, Guns."

Again the guns fired. The *Hecate* at a steady speed was overhauling the U-boat.

"Down one hundred," the Gunnery Officer said.

The next moment an ear-splitting racket broke from the starboard side between the funnels where the twin-barrel Oerlikon could just be brought to bear, firing at extreme range. The little red dots of its tracer bullets disappeared into the U-boat's smoke screen.

The *Hecate's* 4.7 gun fired again.

Then once more she shuddered as an enemy shell tore into her delicate superstructure. Entering above the level of the upper deck, it passed through the bo'sun's locker and the coxswain's cabin before it exploded against the strong trunk of B gun.

The shock threw most of the gun crew to the deck. X gun, aft, fired the next salvo alone. B gun reported "training jammed."

The First Lieutenant, his cap missing and his face bathed in sweat, climbed on to the bridge. "I've had to flood the for'rard magazine," he said. "The deck above was red hot. It was touch and go."

X gun fired again.

"Much damage?"

"The blasted shell exploded in the naval stores. Coils of burning ropes, small fires from the emergency lighting all over the place. Under control soon, sir."

The Captain stroked his unshaven chin. "This fellow is even more of a problem up here than he was down below."

As the last of the U-boat's gun crew tumbled up the conning-tower ladder, the First Lieutenant approached the Kapitän, who stood staring up the open hatch at the circle of blue sky above.

"Shall we man the anti-aircraft guns as well?" he asked.

"No, it is not worth exposing the men for the little damage a machine gun could do at such extreme range."

Otto Kritz, the engineer, was next.

"Permission to open the after hatch, Herr Kapitän. The fumes from the burning battery will make a good smoke screen."

"Excellent, Herr Engineer. At once."

The engineer climbed the ladder and von Stolberg turned to Schwachofer. "Run up the attack periscope so that I can see."

The periscope rose smoothly. The Kapitän trained the instrument. "Ha! We are up-sun of the enemy. Schwachofer, raise the small periscope and conn the quartermaster so that he steers to keep us between the Britisher and the sun. The fool is signalling. I suppose he hopes we will surrender."

At that moment the gun fired, the explosion shaking the U-boat.

Kritz scrambled down the ladder. "The fumes are perfect, Herr Kapitän. Our own crew can see through them, but they will make it very hard for the destroyer."

The gun fired—and again.

"A hit," von Stolberg exclaimed delightedly. "Beneath her bridge somewhere—she is on fire."

The U-boat shuddered with an explosion that was not made by its own gun. The engineer ran up the ladder and reported, "Only part of the after casing blown away. It is nothing, Herr Kapitän."

"Ha!—another hit," exclaimed von Stolberg. "The destroyer's forward gun is out of action. Oh, von Holem, von Holem, that is good shooting indeed. Kunz, tell Herr Oberleutnant von Holem to aim no longer at the bridge, but between the funnels."

"*Jawohl*, Herr Kapitän."

Another shuddering crash came from just outside the hatch. Quick as a flash the engineer was up the ladder and a moment later down again. "Well?" von Stolberg asked.

"The after end of the conning tower. There is much mess but no damage except to the A.A. gun."

"What is the charge in number-one battery?"

"Very low, Herr Kapitän. We cannot run the motors much longer. We are barely making steerage-way."

It was obvious to von Stolberg that the destroyer would soon overtake him. But with one of her guns out of action, the destroyer's speed was now her only superiority. Every other advantage lay with the U-boat. He would, he thought, begin a slow turn to starboard, for the destroyer was coming up on his port side. By so doing he would give her the much larger outside circle to steam, while he would continually present the smallest possible target consistent with keeping his own gun bearing on the enemy.

"Starboard five," he told the quartermaster.

Kunz returned to the control-room, elated and excited. "Von Holem has made two hits. I gave him your message. He says that he will sink the destroyer."

"Stand to attention when you address your commanding officer," von Stolberg snapped, taking his eyes from the periscope.

The gun fired again.

Greatly deflated, Kunz slunk back to his action position beside the now useless attack table. The Kapitän favoured him with a baleful glance and so failed to observe the arrival on the destroyer of the shell that had just been fired.

THE CAPTAIN of the *Hecate* was now faced with a problem of some magnitude. His ship had already received serious damage, and his effective gun-power was now no greater than that of his opponent. To withdraw out of range of the enemy's fire, while still remaining within the range of his own more powerful gun, would so reduce the size of his target as to make the chances of a hit most unlikely. With his forward gun out of action, he could fire his after gun only if he kept his ship at a considerable angle to the enemy, and this would offer his adversary a large and highly vulnerable target. To turn away, and so reduce the target he made for the German, while still keeping his after gun in

action, was not only against his nature but would set his gunnery officer the very difficult problem of hitting while the range was continually opening.

The yeoman was at his side. "Signal from Admiralty, sir. Message reads: *Acheron, Marabout, Mastiff diverted to your support oh-nine-oh-two yesterday. Anticipate arrive your position noon today. My oh-eight-five-eight of the eighth to Force M refers.*"

Dragging his tired brain back from the immediate gunnery problem, the Captain considered this information and all it implied. So the Admiralty, too, thought something was afoot in this neglected quarter of the great ocean. The very make-up of the ships sent to join him was sufficient indication of that. A six-inch-gun cruiser, and two fleet destroyers—it was a force quite out of proportion to deal with one U-boat. To the yeoman he said: "Willis, tell Johnson to locate and decode Admiralty's oh-eight-five-eight of yesterday. Pity they didn't put our call signals in the heading."

The exchange with his yeoman had taken but a few minutes. But they were vital minutes indeed. Steering a steady course and moving much faster than the U-boat, the destroyer had almost drawn level with the enemy and, although she had opened the range, her whole silhouette was available as a target.

"Starboard ten," the Captain ordered as soon as he appreciated the position. He had no knowledge of conditions aboard the U-boat, but it seemed that for some reason, probably connected with the smoke that was rising from her, she was temporarily unable to use her Diesels. Her uncharacteristic fierceness after being forced to the surface could only be due to confidence—confidence that she could repair herself sufficiently if given time, or that, if she could hold out long enough, help would come to her from some quarter about which the *Hecate's* Captain knew nothing.

The Captain noted that the bows of his ship were already swinging round to follow the turn that the U-boat had started. Now, thank heaven, the wretched boat was no longer up-sun of him. In fact, if the turn continued it would soon be the gun-layer of the submarine who would have the sun in his eyes.

It was at this precise moment that the shell arrived that had been fired while the commanding officer of the U-boat had been distracted by his junior.

It plunged through the thin side plating at the after corner of number-one boiler-room, penetrated the bulkhead dividing it from number-two boiler-room, and burst against the curved flank of the second boiler. The effects of this single hit were almost disastrous. The giant fans, whose high-pitched whirr was a constant feature of life in a destroyer, normally kept the boiler-rooms under pressure while the torches were alight, in order to force the flame through the boilers and the hot gas up the funnel; and once the pressure was released through the torn side, the inevitable flashback occurred. For an instant before the automatic devices cut off the supply of oil, the boiler-room was a searing furnace where tortured men shrieked in agony.

The position was bad in this boiler-room, but it was even worse in the other. The bursting shell had destroyed at least a quarter of the tubes of number-two boiler. From these tubes, and from the big main steam-pipe, also damaged, there drained away every ounce of steam in all three boilers. In this room the crew died instantly.

The Captain, on the bridge, saw a huge cloud of steam rise from somewhere between the two funnels, carrying among its snow-white billows the black oily smoke from the fire in the forward boiler-room. The throb of the engines died.

"Ship's not answering her wheel, sir," the coxswain reported.

The Captain knew his ship had received a vital wound. The wind, which was light, was on his starboard quarter. As she lost her way through the water, the *Hecate* would turn ever more quickly to starboard, until she came to rest almost beam-on to the sea. Then her head would be towards the U-boat and her after gun could no longer be made to bear on the enemy. There would be a big arc ahead of her in which the U-boat Kapitän could manœuvre with impunity, while he fired into the *Hecate's* unprotected bows until he sank her.

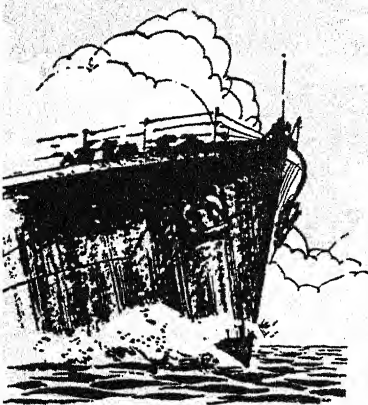
For the first time the Captain found his own confidence in the final outcome distinctly upset. The fates had been kind to the U-boat. The lucky chance of surfacing up-sun, the three hits, each in its own way

tipping the scales more heavily against the *Hecate*—these had put the destroyer in an untenable position from which she could only be extricated if the wheel of fortune should turn once more.

Thank God the after gun was still firing! Wondering how much longer it would bear, and unable to see it because of the steam cloud, he turned to watch the fall of its shot. Already the U-boat was moving slowly towards the arc of complete safety. For a moment it subsided into the hollow of a swell until only the conning tower and gun were visible. It rose swiftly as the sea passed under it. He could see the puff of yellowy-white smoke as its gun fired.

Then, miraculously, another more orange explosion occurred beneath the enemy muzzle, and a dark yellow blob of smoke hovered for an instant round the place where the orange flash had been.

When the smoke cleared away, the gun's barrel pointed aimlessly into the sky and of the men who had tended it a moment before there was no sign.



Cold Steel

0916 to 1205, Zone Time
Thursday, 9 September

WHEN von Stolberg again trained the periscope on to the destroyer, he saw the havoc the last shot had caused. It did not seem likely that she would steam again before he could complete her destruction.

If only he could get ahead of her, so that her after gun would not be able to train on him, he could sink her at his leisure.

"Port twenty," he ordered.

Slowly, desperately, the U-boat turned. Just as slowly, the Kapitän moved round, grasping the periscope handles to keep the destroyer in view.

"Schwachofer, I believe she has stopped! Soon we shall be out of the arc of fire of that after gun, and then we can sink the swine."

"There is very little left in the battery, Herr Kapitän."

"We only need a very little. In three hundred metres we shall be safe. Less than that, because as he stops he will lie beam-on to the wind, and his head will come round towards us."

Schwachofer could sense the appalling suspense under which his Kapitän was labouring. The man was breathing heavily with excitement, and his tongue licked his dry lips.

Their own gun fired again.

A second later there was a shuddering explosion interlaced with high-pitched screams. The noise died away and left a silence full of foreboding.

Von Stolberg leapt to the forward door of the control-room. The gloom of the fore-part of the boat was shot with a beam of daylight from the open fore hatch, through which a wisp of brown smoke now spiralled down. Von Stolberg stopped short as he saw Petty Officer Müller run up the ladder. The feet paused when the head and shoulders were in the air. Then the sea boots began to come down the ladder slowly.

"Well, Müller, the gun?" the Kapitän asked.

"*Kaput*, Herr Kapitän, *kaput*."

"And the gun crew?"

Müller met the Kapitän's stare with a strangely sullen glance. "They also." He paused before adding, "Herr Kapitän." Then he turned and disappeared forward into the gloom.

The Kapitän made a mental note that Müller's nerve must be cracking. For himself, he saw no reason to doubt their ability, even without the gun, to hold out until the arrival of the *Cecilie*. He hurried back to the periscope. "'Midships—steady . . . Good. I can no longer see their gun. Herr Oberleutnant, stop the motors. It's now past nine o'clock, and we have less than three hours to wait. Let us go with the engineer to see if it is possible to get a Diesel running. But first I will reload at least one torpedo. You have sufficient air, Herr Oberleutnant, to fire?"

Schwachofer bent to inspect the dials of the air bottles. "I think enough to fire one torpedo, Herr Kapitän, but it will not be easy to reload with

the boat rolling like this." To manhandle the greasy two-ton monsters while there was any movement on the boat, and particularly without the usual good lighting, meant serious risk to both the torpedoes and the men.

"It is never easy, Herr Oberleutnant, to do one's duty. But we will reload at least one tube."

The Kapitän led the way forward. "Leutnant Kunz, Petty Officer Müller," he called as he neared the foot of the forward ladder. The two men appeared out of the gloom.

"Reload one torpedo," the Kapitän ordered.

"Herr Kapitän," the petty officer said quietly. It might be supposed that his age and years of experience would entitle him to a hearing.

"What is it, Müller?"

"The boat rolls too much. We will damage the torpedo and possibly crush a man."

"Then load another torpedo." The two men looked at each other, and the petty officer's eyes fell. "At once, Petty Officer Müller. And report to me as soon as you have reloaded." He turned and, followed by Schwachofer and Kritz the engineer, stumped up the ladder.

Out in the strong sunlight, von Stolberg blinked and was suddenly aware of his own tiredness. The three officers stood for a moment looking at the wreck of the gun. The British shell had exploded underneath its mounting. Nothing that they could conceivably do would ever enable another shot to be fired.

They passed on round the conning tower and paused at its battered after end to inspect the wreck of the A.A. gun. Yellow-green fumes still eddied in waves from the open after hatch that led to the engine-room; from inside came a continuous stuttering sound as the great batteries below the engine-room floor consumed themselves.

"I wonder if we could get down there in the oxygen escape masks?" von Stolberg asked.

"Herr Kapitän, no man could endure the heat. The floor plates will be too hot to stand on."

"Pour some water down and see," von Stolberg insisted.

The engineer hurried away to the fore hatch to call for a bucket.

Suddenly there was a sharp metallic *ping* from close at hand. The Kapitän and his Executive Officer looked at each other. "What the devil was that?" von Stolberg asked.

They turned to look at the destroyer, rolling in the swell half a mile away. The cloud of steam and smoke was lighter now, but she still remained immovable, with her bow towards them.

This time they heard the whine in the air before a rifle bullet crumpled, with another metallic *ping*, against the conning tower. They jumped as one man into the shell-torn hole in the casing.

The engineer was coming back round the side of the conning tower carrying a bucket of sea water. "Careful, Otto," Schwachofer called; "they are firing with rifles." Another bullet whined overhead as Kritz reached them.

"*Zum Teufel*—he shoots well," von Stolberg remarked.

"It is impossible to get to the engine-room hatch on the protected side because of the fumes," Kritz informed them. "But there is shelter for one in the casing beside the hatch. Herr Kapitän, if you will trust my report, I will go and pour some water down."

"Herr Kapitän, I submit," Schwachofer spoke, "that I should do so. You have only one engineer and if he were to be wounded or killed——"

"You are right. Kritz, let Schwachofer have the bucket."

Gathering himself, the Executive Officer made a dash for the after hatch. A second sufficed to pour the water down the open hatch and to hear the sizzle of steam as it splashed on the deck below. In a minute, Schwachofer had rejoined his companions. "It is quite hopeless. The plates are too hot."

"Then we will go back and torpedo the swine."

One by one they leapt over the edge of the casing and made their way forward. Once past the conning tower they were hidden from the marksmen on the destroyer.

From below, as they descended the ladder, came a heavy rumbling noise, shouts of alarm mingled with cries of pain, and then the sound of voices raised in anger.

The Kapitän stormed into the dark space of the forward torpedo room.

"Silence," he barked. "Stand back, all of you."

Following his commanding officer, Schwachofer could dimly discern the shining bulk of a torpedo lying diagonally across the confined space. The Kapitän's call for silence had been obeyed by everyone except the man who lay prone beneath that great silvery tube. Falling from its grabs, the two-ton monster had pinned one of the handlers to the deck. His agonized whimperings filled the dimly lit cavern—a terrible strain to nerves already stretched to breaking point.

The Kapitän bent to look at the fallen monster. "Both rudders and the propeller damaged. Herr Leutnant Kunz, how did this happen?"

"Petty Officer Müller omitted to see that the after grab was properly secured."

"That is a lie, Herr Kapitän."

"Petty Officer, wait until you are spoken to."

"It is a lie," the man repeated.

"Be quiet, Müller," the Kapitän ordered with fury.

"I cannot be quiet, Herr Kapitän, when this young fool accuses me of something I have never done," Müller answered with considerable dignity.

The probability that he was being forced to back the wrong horse only made the Kapitän more angry. Discipline had to be maintained. The words of this knowledgeable petty officer about an inexperienced young officer might be right, but to let them pass would do incalculable damage.

"Herr Oberleutnant," he said to Schwachofer, and his voice sounded unutterably weary, "Petty Officer Müller is to be placed under open arrest for insulting an officer."

"*Jawohl*, Herr Kapitän. Petty Officer Müller," Schwachofer called, and turned to lead the way back to the control-room. Dazedly Müller stumbled after him. The day, Schwachofer thought, grew more and more awful. Had they not enough with which to contend without this conflict among themselves?

"Now," von Stolberg said, "we will lift the fore end of the torpedo and release Schott. Then we'll chock this torpedo on the deck, and bring out another. And I will take charge of the loading."



THE DAMAGE to the destroyer was even worse than was at first supposed. The shell, in entering the ship's side, had severed the steering rods that connected the wheel on the bridge with the steering engine right aft and above the rudder head. Even if her crew should get her steaming again, the helm orders would have to be passed by telephone from the bridge to the auxiliary hand-steering compartment in the stern. Only from number-three boiler was there any hope of obtaining steam, and even that boiler had sustained considerable damage, not primarily from the shell itself but from the distortion of the boiler tubes during rapid cooling after the steam had escaped.

The Engineer Officer, going to the bridge to make his report, found the Captain, rifle in hand, taking careful aim at the small target that lolloped lazily over the swell ahead of them.

"Just keeping the enemy awake," the Captain explained. "Well, Chief, what's your report?"

"I can probably get some sort of steam on number three in about an hour, sir. But it won't be much—just enough to move the ship. I can't promise more than that, sir."

"You can't do better than your best, anyway. Let me know when I can move her—then I'm going to ram the ruddy U-boat. That is, if it stays where it is."

The First Lieutenant joined them. He saluted the Captain. "Permission to take away the motor-boat and whaler with a boarding party, sir?"

The Captain thought for a moment. "Right, Chief," he dismissed the Engineer. "Ring the telegraphs when you're ready." Then, turning to his Executive Officer: "No, I don't think so, Number One. There are at least forty very angry *Herrenvolk* in that tin cigar. They'd pick you off as easy as wink. If we could give you any real supporting fire from the ship, it would be a different matter. But I'll tell you what you *can* do—you can put the boats in the water and try to tow our stern round a bit so that the after gun can get a shot or two away. If the Chief can give us steam, I'll not hoist in the boats before I ram the U-boat. They'll be available then, either for picking up survivors or for a boarding party. So take some rifles and revolvers, and good luck to you."

When the First Lieutenant had clattered down the ladder, the Captain

thought that never since he had joined the *Hecate* had there ever been such a deathly hush on the bridge. With the loss of her steam the big dynamos had died; and without them there was no asdic, no radar, no wireless, no pitometer log clicking.

The yeoman came to him. "Johnson has found the signal to Force M, sir." He handed the Captain the message board.

Force M from Admiralty. Detach Acheron, Marabout, Mastiff to join Hecate shadowing U-boat at 0625 in position 06° 35' N. 30° 10' W. Course 210° four knots. Anticipate U-boat may be attempting to rendezvous with Raider S or Raider M. Important to reduce wireless traffic to absolute minimum.

The Captain handed the pad back and said with a smile: "Such a minimum that they did not repeat the signal to us. For all that, I think we'd better call *Acheron* up now on the emergency transmitter and tell her exactly where we are. Make to *Acheron*: *Have brought U-boat to surface. Am repairing shell damage preparatory to ramming. My position 5° N. 32° W. Be sure it's coded.*"

"Aye aye, sir." Willis hurried from the bridge.

The next visitor was Robins. "I'm sorry we're a little late today, sir," he said to the astonished Captain, spreading a napkin on the chart table. "'Fraid it's reconstituted eggs again, sir."

"Robins, you're a marvel." The Captain ate hurriedly; and by the time he had finished, the yeoman was back again.

"Message passed, sir."

"Did she sound near?" the Captain asked.

"Can't say, sir. But the range of the emergency set isn't all that great and she 'came up' at once."

A moment later a telegraphist came on the bridge with a signal. He gave it to the yeoman, who handed it to the Captain.

The message read: *Acheron to Hecate. Expect to arrive your position 1200 today.*

"That's heartening to know anyway," the Captain said as he handed it back.

Both the boats were now in the water, trying to haul the destroyer's stern round; but it was soon obvious that they could accomplish nothing.

The loud-hailer was no longer working, so the Captain went aft himself and shouted over the guard-rails.

"It's no good, Number One. You'd better wait until I've found out from the Chief when he thinks he'll have steam." With that he hurried down to the boiler-room.

"Well, Chief?"

"Not too good, sir. But with luck we'll be able to give you some sort of steam. About twenty minutes more, I reckon."

"That'll have to do."

The Captain climbed the long ladders back to the deck. He shouted to the First Lieutenant, "Chief thinks he can give us steam at"—he glanced at his watch—"about half past ten. I think the boats had better take a box of grenades each and lay about half a mile off the U-boat. If she tries to move, the chances are that she won't be able to go very fast, and you might be able to intercept her. Don't start anything unless you have to—much better to let me ram her."

On his way back to the bridge he went into the sick-bay to see the burned stokers from the forward boiler-room. They were sleeping the merciful sleep that morphine gives. "Well, Doctor?"

"Not so bad, sir. They're terribly burned, and I'd like to get them into a proper hospital as soon as we can. But they'll be all right for the moment. When can we steam, sir?"

"Very soon now, Doc. I'm going to ram as soon as the Chief's got steam on his kettle. Come up, if you'd like, and watch the fun."

"Thanks, I will. As soon as I feel her move. I can't do anything more for these chaps."

The Captain went back to the bridge. It had not seemed twenty minutes since he'd been in the boiler-room, but he had hardly arrived when the coxswain was calling up the voice-pipe. "Engine-room's rung the telegraphs, sir."

"Thank you, Coxswain."

He was panting after his climb. Suddenly he realized that he had been without sleep since eight o'clock on Tuesday morning, and it was now almost Thursday noon. Fifty hours. Strangely, he felt less tired than he had the previous day. "Coxswain, you'd better get down to the

after-steering position. I'll have to conn you by telephone. Report as soon as you're ready."

VON STOLBERG and Schwachofer, driving their men like furies, had succeeded in reloading two bow tubes; but unless they could turn the boat round, they could still not fire them at the destroyer. With perspiration running down their faces they had gone back to the control-room.

"Kritz," said von Stolberg to the engineer, "I want to see if there is anything left in the battery. Use only the starboard engine." And to the quartermaster, Schrader: "Put your rudder hard over to port."

"Hard-a-port," Schrader repeated.

The Kapitän nodded at the engineer.

The orders were carried out. For a second that was agony to the waiting men no sound came. Then very slowly a gentle purring noise was heard.

"Starboard motor turning," Kritz's voice came in a whisper. The four Germans looked at each other and breathed deeply.

The motion of the boat changed. The seas were now astern of her. She hung poised on one and then her stern slid gracefully into the hollow. When it rose again the force of the next sea swung her round rapidly. Von Stolberg trained the periscope.

"Stand by tubes." He gave the order, and then, "Gentlemen, we will sink him now. She will come round slowly. Ah—very soon now. Stand by, Schwachofer—and stand by, you *verdammte* British——" A longer pause. "*Du lieber Gott*, he is moving! Kritz! Give her every bit of power you have."

"There is no more, Herr Kapitän."

"Port, you fool—hard-a-port."

"The rudder is hard over, Herr Kapitän."

"The motor has stopped, Herr Kapitän."

Von Stolberg raised his head and shoulders from the periscope. Schwachofer was astonished that any face could change so much in so short a time.

"Can we not angle the torpedoes?" Kritz suggested.

"What? Without electricity to set the attack table?"

The three Germans looked at each other. "The *Cecilie* will be here in one hour and twenty minutes," the Kapitän murmured.

"I fear the destroyer may be here first," Schwachofer said.

"He will ram us—if he has any sense," the Kapitän said. He started up the conning-tower ladder, then turned. "And I fear that he has. Unlock the revolver cabinet and give us one each."

Revolver in hand, the Kapitän climbed up the ladder.

"STARBOARD twenty," the Captain said into the telephone hand-set.

Slowly, very slowly, the destroyer began to move. Her head turned away from her enemy as she set out in a big quarter circle. She would make her final approach on her opponent's beam, where the blow that she intended to deal would be lethal.

"Midships. Yeoman, signal to the boats to close in."

"Aye aye, sir."

"Port five. Pilot, tell Guns to open fire whenever he can."

"Aye aye, sir."

The after gun began to fire steadily. Shots once more fell about the U-boat, and two more hits were scored. Then the gun stopped as the *Hecate* began to turn towards her quarry.

"Gunnery Officer reports target obscured, sir."

"Tell Guns it's cold steel now," the Captain answered.

Slowly and sedately the *Hecate* advanced. Coming down-wind and down-sea, she moved gracefully, her high bow with its long knife-edge rising and falling as it cleft the seas in two.

"Port twenty." Sunlight flooded the scene. The blue-green waves were dancing, the graceful ship bowing to the swell. The Captain sensed rather than saw the Doctor coming up beside him, and was glad of the company of his friend.

"Starboard twenty." At slow speed, down-sea, and with the rudder in the hand-steering that was so much slower than her steering engine, it was proving very difficult to keep the *Hecate* on a steady course. The Captain could imagine the sweating men below, working feverishly at the big hand wheel. Had he realized just how difficult it would be to steer her down the seas, he would have turned the other way and come

up-wind against the enemy. It was too late to change; and although he did not know it, the U-boat would have torpedoed him had he turned to port.

Closing now. They could see the conning tower plainly and a flaxen-haired man standing there.

"Port twenty."

Suddenly the Captain was aware of a rifle raised beside him. One of the signalmen was aiming at the solitary figure on the conning tower.

The Captain leapt at the gun and seized it from the astonished sailor. Then, realizing that a short while before he himself had been firing at the U-boat, he was forced to explain. "It's quite different now, Higgins. Before, there was a chance that they could torpedo us. Now they haven't an earthly—and in a moment they will be survivors."

The precious seconds could have been otherwise employed. A wave slightly irregular in comparison with its fellows rose a little to port of the *Hecate's* stern. She



was already carrying twenty degrees of port rudder, and the bow swung rapidly to port, passing the conning tower of the U-boat at which the Captain had been aiming.

"Hard-a-starboard."

Below, the men sweated to obey, heaving round the heavy wheel whose low gearing required many turns of the wheel before the rudder could be moved from one side to the other.

The *Hecate's* knife-edged bow was poised threateningly above the low hull of the U-boat as it lay in the trough. The wave that had slewed the destroyer's stern and in passing under had raised her bow now flung up the hull of *U-121* at the same moment that its forward motion allowed the *Hecate's* bow to slice down.

With a searing crash and a scream of tortured steel, the bow bit deeply into the metal flank of the submarine. As it cut through the ballast tanks and stove in the hull, the U-boat heeled. The German officer's arm shot up. For a moment before the man was tumbled into the sea, the Captain glimpsed a revolver aimed at himself. He was almost sorry that he had stopped the signalman from firing.

The *Hecate* had dealt her enemy a mortal wound; but it was a glancing blow, and it should have been a straight one. The U-boat was forced round by her assailant until the two ships lay side by side and beam-on to the sea. The sharp port hydroplane at the U-boat's stern penetrated the plating of the destroyer's second, and largest, boiler-room. Rolling apart as the waves' crest passed under them, the two vessels were flung together again in the succeeding trough. With her momentum the *Hecate* had moved forward; and this time the hydroplane, like a deadly fang, punctured the plating of the engine-room.

The Captain, on the bridge, was aware of the disaster. It was only the extent of the damage that remained in doubt. He moved hurriedly to the after end of the bridge, where the long ladders rose in two flights from the main deck thirty feet below. Members of the boiler-room and engine-room crews were already standing between the funnels, and more and more of their mates joined them. The U-boat's men, too, were now pouring out of her, abandoning their vessel in yellow rubber dinghies, some of which were already pushing off from the far side.

From the bridge the Captain saw the urgent figure of the engineer pushing through the crowd. The Chief paused at the foot of the ladder and, looking up, saw the Captain above him.

"What chance, Chief?" the Captain called.

"Without full steam to work the ejectors, absolutely none, sir."

"How many compartments will flood?"

"Number-one and -two boiler-rooms and the engine-room."

"We'll not be able to keep her afloat."

"I don't reckon so, sir."

"We'll abandon ship, Chief." The Captain turned back to the front of the bridge: "Get your sick cases on deck, Doctor—port side. Yeoman, get the motor-boat alongside to take them off." And to the signalman, "Tell Johnson to make an S.O.S. to *Acheron* on the emergency set and then abandon ship."

He saw the navigator beside him. "Pilot, have stations for abandoning ship piped, and then get down to the main deck and give a hand getting the life-saving equipment over the side."

He was alone on the bridge with nothing more to do. He glanced over the side at the U-boat, which was now obviously sinking. His own ship felt heavier and less lively, wallowing drunkenly in the swell. The last of the U-boat's men were leaving her, and already his own men were starting to go over the side.

He was tired, too tired even to feel anger against the enemy. Slowly he went down to the main deck.

THE SEA was full of bobbing heads when both the destroyer and U-boat had sunk beneath the waves. In the centre of the crowd the yellow dinghies from the submarine and the grey Carley Floats from the destroyer rose and fell in the seas. In them the two crews were inextricably mixed, and men of both nations helped each other to clamber into a boat, or swam companionably alongside men whom they had been indirectly trying to slay a moment before.

The Captain swam to a Carley Float and climbed in. There were four other men in the raft, three sailors from the destroyer and one German. Another hand appeared, grasping desperately alongside.

"Get him in," the Captain said. "He's got no life-jacket." The man was hauled into the boat. The two and a half gold stripes and the star on his cuffs told their own tale. The two Captains were in the same raft.

At the moment when the Captain recognized the still-panting German, he was himself identified. The newcomer struggled to his feet as the British Captain sat down.

"Korvetten-kapitän Peter von Stolberg," the Kapitän said stiffly. The raft rolled as it passed over the top of a swell, and von Stolberg nearly went over the side. He made sure of his balance and placed his legs far apart. "We have sunk ourselves," he announced.

"More correctly, I sank you, and then was fool enough to let my ship be driven into yours."

The German shrugged.

"Won't you sit down?"

"I prefer to stand."

"You've kept me awake for the last two nights. Excuse me if I do not join you."

Finally, despite himself, von Stolberg sat down on the opposite side of the raft.

As it rocked over the waves and the two Captains adjusted their balance, they had the ludicrous appearance of a couple of mandarins bowing to each other.

"Herr Captain," von Stolberg began again. "We have business to discuss."

"Oh, not really! All I expect from you is that you will keep discipline among your men, and I'll look after mine. Not that any of them look as if they're going to cause trouble." The Captain glanced round at the mixed nationalities that bobbed and floated all round. "But I do wish you'd tell me where you were going. I promised my Doctor that I'd ask you that."

"Herr Captain, I have arrived."

"Congratulations! You know, I said to my navigator only this morning that I thought you might have done so. Of course I——"

The German, speaking sharply, interrupted him. "Herr Captain. Your ship's name, if you please?"

"My ship is—was—His Majesty's Destroyer *Hecate*. And the number of your U-boat?" the Captain asked, supposing that he must overlook the peremptory tone of the German's question.

"Herr Captain, I am not at liberty to disclose the number of my U-boat."

The Englishman was genuinely puzzled by this apparently discourteous and unreasonable reply. He tried again. "You know, von Stolberg, you are adopting a peculiar attitude."

The German rose solemnly to his feet, almost going overboard again. Balancing carefully, he spoke. "Herr Captain, I think you overlook something. I must make myself plain. You are my prisoner."

"I am your *what?*" The Captain was shocked into sitting bolt upright.

"You are my prisoner. The German armed cruiser *Cecilie* meets me here at noon today. She has many Allied prisoners. You and your men will join them. I ask you to give me your parole."

The Captain longed to tell this piece of Junkerdom that if the *Cecilie* had been invited to a party at 5° North 32° West, he also had asked guests. Instead, he said, "Look, if you want a fight, you can have one. If I were to tell my lads to chuck the whole lot of you into the ditch—they'd do it. I don't want that to happen, but if I have one more word about my being your prisoner—I'll slap your ears back myself. Now sit down before I knock you down."

Incredulous, and sustained by confidence in the early arrival of the *Cecilie*, von Stolberg answered slowly: "Herr Captain, you are going to be my prisoner."

"Come and get me then." The Captain had not felt so physically angry since he had left school. He rose to his feet. Leading Seaman Thomas rose with him.

"No, no, Thomas. He's my bird. I'm going to dust his pants for him." The Captain put his hand on the sailor's shoulder and forced him to sit again.

"Sock 'im hard, sir." Thomas sounded gleeful.

The Captain did so. The German stumbled on the rocking raft and came back madly like a bull.

Whether or not the British sailors would have left the two to fight it out alone, no one will ever know; because in the next raft Kunz seized a paddle and flung it heavily across the intervening stretch of water. It caught the British Captain between the shoulder blades.

At the same moment Stoker Bradley, who sat next to Kunz, and who only a moment before had offered the German a cigarette, whipped out a monkey wrench from his overall jacket and smashed in the young Nazi's head. What a moment before had been a party of shipwrecked sailors bobbing companionably over the swell was suddenly a waving sea of arms and legs as the occupants of each frail craft locked in deadly combat, oblivious to all about them.

The rumpus had gone on for ten minutes when it was brought to a sudden panting hush. The *Hecates*, who were gradually prevailing in each raft, raised their eyes to the source of a new sound.

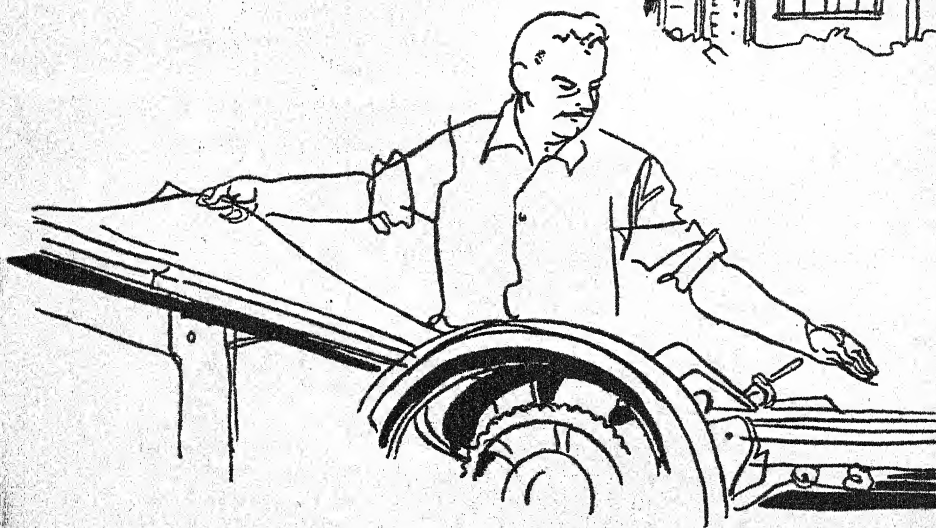
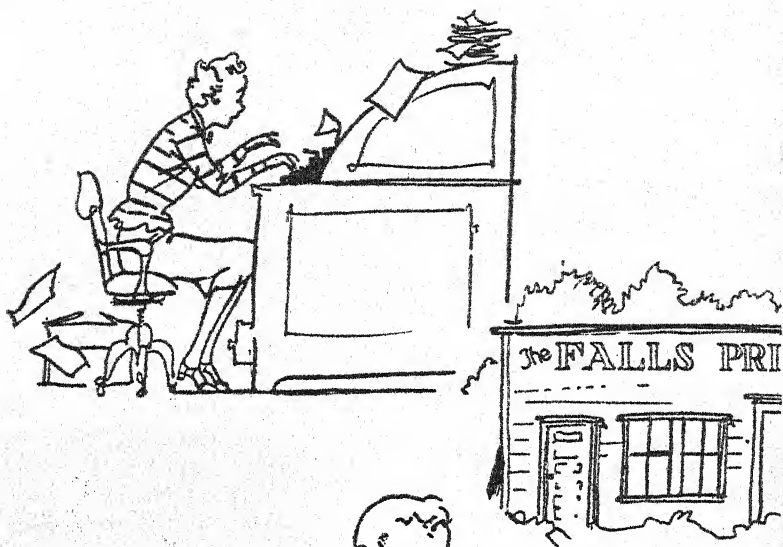
"And just what is going on here?" the unmistakably English voice asked. Then again the loud-hailer blared as, with engines churning in reverse, the British destroyer lay stopped in the swell. "H.M.S. *Marabout*, at your service. Now look lively there, and get aboard as quickly as you can. *Acheron* and *Mastiff* are sinking a German raider just over the horizon. We want to see the fun too."

Commander
D. A. Rayner



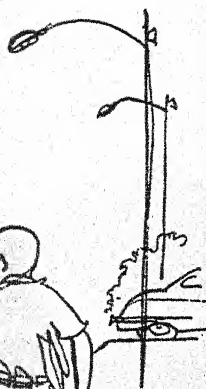
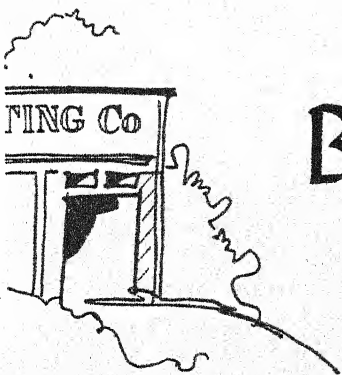
COMMANDER DENYS ARTHUR RAYNER, D.S.C., V.R.D., R.N.V.R., has had a consuming passion for the sea ever since, as an eight-year-old London schoolboy in the First World War, he was punished for drawing exploding U-boats in the margin of his geometry book. Rejected for the regular Navy on medical grounds, he succeeded in getting into the Volunteer Reserve as a midshipman in 1925, when he was seventeen. At the beginning of the Second World War, he commanded trawlers based on Scapa Flow, and in 1943 became the first R.N.V.R. officer in the history of the Navy to be appointed to command a destroyer. He was decorated twice, and mentioned in Dispatches.

Commander Rayner now lives with his wife and three children on a large farm in Berkshire, and each year breeds and sells thousands of turkeys, chickens and pigs. He has published an account of his wartime experiences, *Escort*, and is now working on a novel about a classic naval battle during the Napoleonic wars. When he can take time from his farm and his writing, Commander Rayner much enjoys sailing small boats and riding.



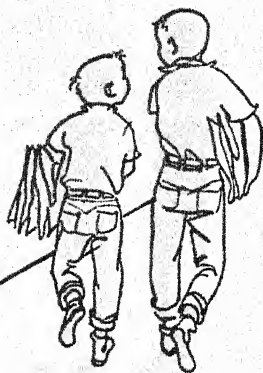
Illustrations by Dorothea Warren Fox

Minding Our Own Business



A condensation of the book by

CHARLOTTE PAUL



"Minding Our Own Business" is published by William Heinemann, London

WHEN Charlotte Paul and her husband gave up their comfortable city life to buy a little weekly newspaper in a remote country town, they had no idea of the troubles—and the joys—in store for them and their two young sons.

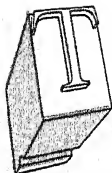
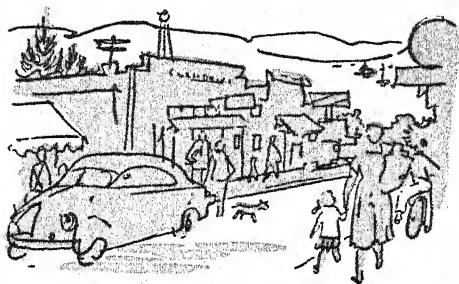
This is the lively and courageous story of their first five years as country editors and printers. Their trials run from ancient equipment and not enough money to eccentric reporters and irate subscribers. Their triumphs lie in a discovery of loyalty and neighbourliness, and a sense of steady achievement. Above all, this is the story of a good life made for itself by one family, all working together in “a business of our own.”

“Witty and well-written.”

—*The Times Literary Supplement*

“A delightful story.”

—*Newcastle Evening Chronicle*



THE LITTLE newspaper office in Snoqualmie, Washington, on a rainy afternoon five years ago was the scene of such earnest endeavour as to remain for ever among my memories of moments that weren't funny at the time. The fact that it was rainy is hardly worth mentioning. The Snoqualmie Valley receives an annual drenching of fifty-five to sixty inches. Rain makes the trees grow big and keeps the pastures green, and is therefore an economic blessing. My disloyal objection to it on that particular afternoon was based on the fact that most of it was coming through the roof.

The staff we had recently inherited was with us in the shop: Hermia, our assistant editor, who was also the wife of the superintendent of schools, was frowning over a news item one of our country correspondents had scrawled on the back of an envelope. In the back shop, which was illuminated by one dirty window and one naked electric-light bulb, was Mr. Jenkins, the printer, a man of seventy, to whom the years had given skill and ill humour in equally large quantities; somewhere along the line Mr. Jenkins's disposition seemed to have fallen into the press. Chet, an eighteen-year-old boy whose heart was in Boy Scout work, was running the big newspaper press and simultaneously reading the Scout-master's manual he had propped up on the feed-board. And there was Olga, the Linotype operator, a smiling, middle-aged woman with grey streaks in her hair, wearing a house-dress under a pretty flowered apron and looking for all the world as if she were about to mix up a batch of

cakes; and Ort, the young advertising manager and one-man circulation and mailing department. Then there were our two sons, Hi and Johnny, five and four years old, respectively. They were at the shop because there was no one at home to take care of them. Last and not least, there were Ed and I, the new owners, editors and publishers, keepers of the mortgage and the public trust. Between the two of us, we had a quarter of a century of experience on big-city newspapers. And between us we didn't know half as much about a country weekly as our teen-age pressman or our crotchety printer. So Ed was wrapping packages on the job-printing table, and I was running from one hole in the ceiling to the next, emptying the coffee tins into which the rain was spilling.

I poured the twenty-seventh tin of rain down the sink and Ed looked up from tying his twenty-seventh bundle just as the front-office door opened. It was a customer carrying two big boxes of printing we had delivered to him only the day before. "I asked for stamped envelopes," he complained. "These are plain."

Ed looked woefully from the good customer to the bad job. Here were two thousand envelopes, useless to anyone but the man whose name we had printed on them. Inspiration struck. "Could you use them if we put stamps on them?"

"Sure. But I've got to have them by tonight."

"We'll stamp them right away," was the majestic reply.

But seven out of nine of us were busy. Our eyes fell on the two unemployed little pre-school freshets to feed the *Snoqualmie Valley Record's* labour pool. Their heads were bent over colouring books. In a voice too cheerful and too loud, Ed said, "Well, boys, I've got a job for you. . . ."

We set them up in business, side by side at the old roll-top desk. Each little boy received one thousand envelopes, one thousand three-cent stamps and a tall glass of water. No colouring book had ever held their interest so completely. An hour later we heard Johnny whisper, "Hi, do you like newspaper work?"

Five-year-old Hi nodded emphatically. "Except for the taste," he whispered back.

A new generation of publishers had been launched on a sea of ink. Ed and I looked at each other. I had a silly lump in my throat. "Did you

imagine it would be like this when we decided to go into business for ourselves?"

Ed grinned. "I never realized, until now, that 'ourselves' would mean all four of us, not just you and me."

It was true. Whatever we had got ourselves into, we were all in it together. We had gone back, in a sense, to the family farm, where everyone at the dinner table had some part in providing the food he ate. For us there would never be casual acceptance of Daddy's pay cheque. We would all know where our food and clothing came from because we would be earning it together. Together. That is the word that brought laughter through tears for five of the hardest and best years of our lives.

WHY WOULD two people with good jobs, congenial friends and a home they loved suddenly abandon all these, move twenty-two hundred miles and go into business for themselves? On the first of August, 1949, we were comfortably situated on a small farm outside Chicago and we expected to be there for the rest of our lives. The farm had contributed mightily to the success of our marriage. We never got bored with each other; there was always too much work to do. We seldom argued; somehow it's hard for two people hoeing corn, or on their knees weeding onions, to think of a clever retort.

When Hiram arrived, in 1944, and Johnny, in 1945, I found that five and a half acres and lots of animals were a pretty good formula for bringing up children, too.

I cherish the memory of my husky little first-born, dressed in nothing but a napkin, going through two fences and across a pasture to pay a visit to a neighbour. The back end of an eighteen-months-old boy crawling under a fence is one of the most beautiful sights in the world.

Ed had a full schedule, travelling daily between his newspaper job in Chicago and home. Children, farm work and free-lance writing kept me more than busy. Our children have always known that "Daddy works and Mama writes." They were soothed to sleep by the click of typewriters and teathed on rejected manuscripts, but there was a great deal of hugging and kissing involved. We got out of all this what we put into it—a lot!

•

Looking back, I can see that our farm was a good training ground for a pair about to tackle private enterprise with very little private capital. In a way we had already been in business for ourselves when we sold poultry, eggs, sweet corn and strawberries.

Ed was always giving our produce away. But when our first big strawberry crop came in, he resolved to change. We had worked in the berry patch until our backs ached and our knees were raw. "I won't let my wife work like a slave," said the new, businesslike Ed, "for less than twenty-five cents a quart." That price, advertised on a sign we hung over our letter-box, brought in customers faster than we could pick. Ed was congratulating himself when a sedan pulled up and the well-dressed couple inside asked for two quarts of strawberries. The overflowing boxes were well settled on the back seat when the woman exclaimed, "Oh my goodness, I left my money in my other purse. I only have thirty-eight cents!"

Ed waved grandly. "That's all right. Take the berries."

"We'll call in with the twelve cents next time we come by."

"Think nothing of it," Ed boomed heartily.

For a week I teased my hard-headed businessman on the subject of letting his wife work like a slave for nineteen cents a quart.

"They'll come back," said Ed.

"Ha!" said I.

The next Sunday afternoon they did. With them, the twelve cents. Ed was vindicated. He was so overjoyed that he insisted the couple stay for a nice, big Sunday dinner.

"I *knew* they were honest," Ed whispered gleefully, as I busied myself preparing some four dollars' worth of provisions.

AFTER FIVE and a half years of marriage, Ed and I had paid off our debts. Barns, house, garage had been remodelled and we had two cars. We had security.

And then Ed left his top-spot newspaper job and went to work for the public-relations department of one of the largest corporations in the world. It was an easy job and a pleasant one. Ed bought a dozen new white shirts and put on ten pounds. But after a year and a half he realized

that an easy, well-paid job was not automatically satisfying. The present was far from invigorating and the future seemed uninspiring. We had daydreamed often of going into business for ourselves. Now Ed was forty-two and I was thirty-three. Was it too late to change?

We sat down in our living-room and talked it over. It was the first of August, and a hot, still day. We could hear the boys playing in the apple orchard. The hens clucked sleepily in the yard behind the house. Through the window we watched the sprinkler spraying a glistening circle on the green lawn. It was peaceful. We loved every bit of it. But we talked of leaving it.

"I've got a good job," Ed said. "It assures me of a salary, an expense account, insurance, eventually a retirement pension."

"But you don't really like it."

"Many men spend their lives in jobs they dislike far more."

"Because they're afraid to let go."

The quick and easy answer to Ed's problem was to go back to work for a newspaper—someone else's. But as we talked, that summer evening, we agreed that we'd risk everything; we'd go into business for ourselves. "Security," we had learned at last, is simply what you carry round in your head and the heart you put into using it. Well, what were we waiting for? It didn't take us five minutes to decide what our small business would be: a newspaper.

"Our own newspaper!" I breathed. "We could be our own bosses. Work when we want, go fishing whenever we like. . . ."

We knew that no daily paper would be small enough for our pocket-book, which contained twenty-three thousand dollars in savings, stocks and the value of the farm. We should be able to make a down payment on a weekly, though; and as long as we were making the leap, we might as well hurtle into the kind of spot we'd always wanted to live in. That meant the Pacific North-west, where I had been born and bred, and where we knew that the climate is mild, fishing is good and you can play golf all the year round. Ed stood up, stretched, and grinned at me. My return grin was from the heart.

We might be foolhardy. The bright light of our courage might be like the last brilliant glow of the bulb just before it burns out. But we

decided, that day, to crawl out of the rut while we were still silly enough to think we could, and we felt wonderful about it.

Ed's two-week holiday began on September first. That was the time it took us to make a round trip to the State of Washington and, with the help of "Pa" Kennedy of the Washington Newspaper Publishers' Association, to pluck the *Snoqualmie Valley Record* like a needle from a haystack out of a territory of thousands of square miles. Snoqualmie was on Pa's "cows and chickens" list. "Cows and chickens," he said. "They got them in the area that paper covers. Nothing more solid than cows and chickens."

That was our first reason for looking at the Snoqualmie newspaper. And then the Snoqualmie Valley was beautiful—that was our second reason. It lies thirty miles east of Seattle, at the foot of the Cascade mountains, and the ice-cold Snoqualmie River flows through its green meadows. In the communities along the river, and in the forested hills above, there lived some eighteen hundred subscribers, many of whom had been reading the paper for twenty-five years. It was a valley with a view, no matter which way you looked. Trees, lakes, rolling pastures, fish in every stream and an eighteen-hole golf course. All ours, for thirty thousand dollars.

Snoqualmie was bathed in sunlight the Sunday afternoon we drove out to see it. Seven hundred and fifty-two population, the signs announced, but that didn't include the dogs, who were catching up on their sleep in the middle of the street. The main business section occupied four blocks paralleling the railway tracks. In a little park between the street and the tracks was a beautifully carved and painted totem-pole.

At a cross-road, near the Snoqualmie River, was a smaller "business section." On one corner, the bank, with rose-bushes six feet tall leaning against its windows. On another, a general store with a hitching ring still firm in the roadside wall, and next door, the post office. On the third corner was the Falls Printing Company, home of the *Snoqualmie Valley Record*. Its door was wide open because the publisher was at work inside.

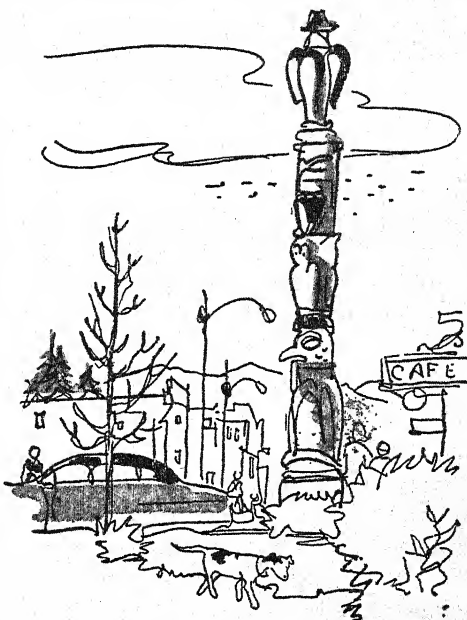
"S'funny thing," Ed said. "Working on a Sunday afternoon."

Dale Krebs, the owner of the *Record*, was a good Linotype operator, a good printer and an old hand at the weekly-newspaper game—all the things we weren't; yet he told us frankly that he wanted to sell out because he and his wife were just exhausted. We hardly listened. We asked what questions our big-city minds could think up, and squinted thoughtfully at machinery we knew nothing about. The towns in the Snoqualmie Valley were small and quiet and sunny. The newspaper was interesting and the building quaint. We wanted it, all of it, and, by telegraph, we borrowed five thousand dollars for earnest money from an old friend. The entire down payment would be eighty-seven hundred dollars.

Sunday we saw the *Record* for the first time. Monday we announced that "after thoughtful consideration" we had decided to buy the paper. Tuesday we signed contracts. From the lawyer's office we turned east and drove back to Chicago. We were already well on our way to being small businessmen. We were in debt.

In the next two weeks we sold the farm (netting only thirteen thousand dollars instead of the seventeen thousand dollars we had planned on), packed and headed for the Snoqualmie Valley.

I kept thinking of the comment of a man in Ed's department: "To try this at your age," he said, "you have to have either an awful lot of money or an awful lot of courage." I already knew that we might run out of money. I wished, and wished hard, that no matter what happened we would never, never run out of courage.



ED AND I had been brought up on the forty-hour work week. As owners of our own business we discovered the seven-day week and the fifteen-hour day. We also discovered certain things we had not realized about our building. Even that first day in Snoqualmie I had noticed that it seemed to need a coat of paint. But what it really needed was a coat of wood.

It had a remarkable floor. It was made of wide softwood boards, black with thirty-two years of oil and grime, and so worn that the knots stood out like the veins on the back of an old woman's hands. It was springy; a heavy footfall on one end of a board almost flipped the person at the other end into the air. When the newspaper press got going, it bounced so hard that pressman Chet looked like a speed-boat driver. There were holes in the floor, too, neatly covered with tin cans hammered flat. These kept the wild life out, and also prevented us from discovering what was holding the building up.

"Central heating" was supplied by an oil burner near the press and a little black demon of a pot-bellied wood stove. Get near it and you broiled, move away and your teeth chattered. Luckily, at times there were so many of us inside the shop that our combined body heat must have added up impressively. Editorial offices, press-room, job printing, storage, bindery, Linotype, make-up tables, reception desk—all these and a lot more were jammed into a thirty-by-forty-foot plant.

Somehow, we got the paper out every Thursday. Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays Ed worked all day and five hours' sleep at night was a luxury. Most Wednesday nights the stack of newsprint near the big press served as Ed's bed. We both looked forward to Sunday—the day we stopped work at five o'clock.

The first Sunday afternoon we worked in the shop, we naïvely believed that this was a very unusual way for people who are their own bosses to spend a week-end. Therefore, I was amazed when a woman walked in, nodded in a friendly way, opened her purse and said she wanted to pay a bill.

I couldn't help asking, "How did you know we'd be here today?"

"How did I know!" Her eyebrows shot up in surprise. "Why, I've lived here for years. I know editors work *all* the time."

We spent our first Thanksgiving in the shop too, and it was our first holiday without a customer. "They're all at home, stuffing themselves with roast turkey," Ed said dryly.

He was gathering pages of a booklet we had printed. The children were crawling round on the floor salvaging pieces of type metal. I was paying the bills, but, no matter how carefully I checked, the sum we owed remained twice the sum in the bank account. At last I called to Ed. "Darling, we'll have to give the company account another trans-fusion from our personal account. I can't pay the bills."

Ed said grimly, "I guess I didn't tell you. The blood bank is dry. I've already sent my General Motors stock to a broker. We should have the money Monday."

We still owed a little more than twenty-one thousand dollars on the paper—we had repaid our good friend his five thousand dollars—and we were selling securities just to meet regular expenses. It was a nice thought for Thanksgiving. "Don't worry, darling," Ed said, patting my shoulder, "we'll work out a system. . . ."

We did, and it was one we followed for many months. I started with the bills filed under the A's, and continued writing cheques until our bank balance was used up. The next month, I started with the Z's and worked backward. I liked this, because we had fewer creditors with names beginning with X, Y and Z than we did at the front of the alphabet and I seemed to be making great strides towards solvency. The flaw in the system was one which creditors under the M's were quick to point out—they were in the middle of the file and I never got that far. So every third month I began with the M's, and worked in both directions.

We did celebrate Thanksgiving, in a way. We didn't get home to our small, cold, rented house until eight o'clock and our holiday dinner consisted of pork chops served on the kitchen table. But we didn't set the alarm clock. "I'm my own boss," Ed said, shaking his fist at the little black clock. "I've got to get used to taking it easy, see?"

IGNORING the former publisher's sage advice, we began changing the paper the moment we walked in the door.

We changed its appearance, using many more pictures. We went out hunting for news and features, until the paper grew from eight to ten to fourteen, and finally to an unprecedented eighteen pages a week. When the sale of Ed's General Motors stock revived us, we bought an automatic press and a brand-new type cabinet, the cost of which we'll remember for ever because it was one dollar a pound—price five hundred and fifty dollars, weight five hundred and fifty pounds.

We had new panes of glass put in the windows, which released a good deal of cardboard for active duty, and we called in the roofing company, so that fifteen coffee tins were rendered obsolete. We raised the wage scale for everyone in the shop. "Making improvements is good business," was Ed's theory. "More production, a better product, happier employees." He was a little shaken, but not really dismayed, by the fact that every week we were paying out more than we were taking in.

A few months later when, like Marshal Foch at the Battle of the Marne, Ed thought that since our centre was giving way and our right was pushed back, there was nothing to do but attack, we sold my own carefully preserved securities and built an addition to the print shop. Then we bought a big four-page press, which would save man-hours, and housed it there. It's not surprising that interested citizens in Snoqualmie were giving odds of twenty to one that the former owner would get the business back in less than a year.

"I know what you're going through," said a fellow small businessman by the name of Ote Sloan. "And I'll tell you this—if you can stick it out for a year, you've got a chance. If you can last for three, the guy you bought from will never get it back. And if you're still here five years from now—boy, they'll have to shoot you to get you out of here."

Then, in time for Christmas, we had a windfall. Some hitherto almost worthless oil stocks suddenly rose in value and brought us two thousand dollars, and Christmas was wonderful. It was our first day off since we had become country publishers.

Of all the treasured possessions we left behind in Illinois, I had missed only my piano. I play by ear, right heel thumping and head bobbing, but without any kind of a musical instrument I feel lost. But one thing I wanted more than a piano, and that was an old-fashioned church organ.

It was late that first Christmas Eve when the boys and I came home from the shop. There, waiting for me, was the most beautiful little reed organ I have ever seen. It had been made in Lebanon, Pennsylvania, in the '80's, had come west via ship round Cape Horn, and in the fashion of its day was carved from music-rack to candle-holders. Ed had found it in the Congregational Church in Carnation, a nearby town, and he and our young ad salesman, Ort, had used the local furniture store's van to go down and get it.

"If you'll deliver my stuff, you can have the van," the owner had agreed, so Ed and Ort had spent a busy Christmas Eve delivering refrigerators and living-room suites all over the Valley so as to race fifteen miles to Carnation and bring me back my Christmas present.

They grinned proudly and asked, "Do you like it?"

I replied instantly by shedding buckets of tears.

"You're so sweet to me!" I wailed.

By the end of the year, the *Record's* new publisher and his wife were showing symptoms of battle fatigue. Our nerves stood up like quills on a porcupine's back; a friendly pat on the back and we'd come up swinging. And then, when we were almost broke and almost broken, the weather administered the *coup de grâce*.

The storm of 1950 broke on New Year's Eve, and didn't let up for two months. It wasn't one blizzard; it was several. Eighty-mile-an-hour winds drove the snow into giant drifts. Then came sheets of freezing rain, and the thermometer would drop to five or ten above zero and stay there until it was time for more snow. Every local businessman wondered how he could keep going and who would ever get to his place if he did.

The roads were alternately ice-covered, flooded, or blocked with snow, and power and phone lines were frequently down. Haggard crews from our little local companies raced from one "case of trouble" to the next. They worked in six feet of snow, seven days a week, and apologized because they could not work all night since they were the same men that had to make repairs in the day-time.

One bleak Wednesday night, at the height of a blow, our old Linotype

broke down. The Linotype is the heart of the country print shop. When it stopped dead the night before publication day, in that weather, we were in a truly desperate situation.

At two in the morning Ed telephoned Tom Dobbs, publisher of a weekly paper in the next county, and described the symptoms. Tom said, "I think I know what's wrong. Now, first do this. . . ." Ed went back to the machine, carried out Tom's instructions, ran back to the phone and asked, "Yes, what next?" Tom's voice from the next county continued, "Now do this. . . ." And thus, at two in the morning, with one man standing barefoot on a cold floor at one end of the line, and another

racing from Linotype to telephone at the other, the repair was made and we were back in business.

One of the worst storms that winter also came on a Wednesday night. When Ed rose in the morning from his usual bed of newsprint, the streets were blocked by snowdrifts four feet high. A glance outside convinced him the staff couldn't possibly get to work.

About ten minutes to eight he saw an odd procession making its way towards the shop. At its head was the superintendent of schools, a six-foot-three-inch Norwegian. He was breaking trail, with great kicks of his size-thirteen boots. Behind



him was his wife, our assistant editor, in ski trousers, boots and lumber-jacket. And immediately behind *her* was our little book-keeper, also swathed to her ear-lobes, carefully falling in and out of the super's foot-prints. They had walked two miles through some of the deepest snow in the Valley, and they made it right on time.

"I didn't think you'd come to work today," Ed said, all choked up with admiration.

"What?" the women exclaimed together. "Not come to work on *Thursday*?"

The only member of the *Record* staff humiliated by the weather was Ort, who liked to do the right thing and had a tendency to blush. As luck would have it, both Ed and I were out on the afternoon that our Johnny decided he couldn't wait until he got home. Ort, doubling as baby sitter while he drew up his ad schedule, knew of only one functioning lavatory in the vicinity—the one in the bank opposite. So, four-year-old John in tow, he went to the bank and asked one of the cashiers if it would be all right . . . "Go right in," the cashier said, "through that office."

Ort opened the office door, only to see that a meeting of the board of directors was in progress within. "I . . . the little boy . . . excuse me he . . ."

At that point Johnny informed the president of the bank, the vice-president, the head-cashier and five members of the board of directors as to just what it was he had to do. "Come right in," the bank president said quickly. "Straight through, and to your right."

The board waited respectfully while Ort and Johnny walked over their feet and, errand accomplished, retraced their route. "Excuse me, uh, us," Ort mumbled, red-faced.

"That's all right, think nothing of it," the president said heartily. And added with the touch of true hospitality, "*Any* time."

THAT YEAR the rigours of life at the shop were far more bearable than the comforts of home. Rentals, in small towns, are houses the landlord doesn't want to live in himself. Our house, being innocent of insulation, simply could not be heated by its belching coal furnace. We joked about rushing the milk bottles into the refrigerator so that they wouldn't

freeze and blow their tops, and we rushed ourselves into bed to keep us from doing the same. But the house did have three bedrooms, which I had felt we needed so as to put up a "live-in" housemaid. Hiram was at kindergarten every morning, but four-year-old Johnny needed all-day care, and I had to work. My experience with a succession of maids was discouraging, but the grand climax was Violet.

Violet gave no appearance of shrinking. She stood six feet tall and weighed more than seventeen stone. She had worked round lumber camps for fifteen or twenty years, and her gentlest tone was pitched to rise above the roar of a gang saw. "Don't you reach for that sugar bowl!" she would bellow at the little boys during breakfast. "Want to get sugar diabetes?"

During the war Violet had sorted and stacked lumber in the big local lumber mill, and she was one of the best men they had. Being used to throwing heavy objects, she attacked housework in the same way. She hated to get down on her knees, she explained, because it was so hard to get up again, so she dusted under our big double bed by lifting the whole thing with one hand while she wielded a dust mop with the other. The only trouble was that her way of putting the bed back in place was simply to let go of it. One leg broke off in the crash. Ed repaired it, against Violet's thundering gale of apologies. Two days later the bed was back on the floor with two broken legs. This time, Violet explained in a tearful roar, all she did was lean on it.

Soon after, a living-room chair suffered the same fate.

"I can keep mending the furniture," Ed objected, "but about two more of her apologies and I'll be deafened for life. You'll have to fire her."

"Who, *me?*"

"Oh, all right. . . ." Ed is five feet six and he hadn't been getting half as much nourishment as Violet. But he took me and the boys to the shop and went back home to fire her. We've never again had a housekeeper "live in." When necessary, the children simply stayed with me at the shop.

ONE MIDWINTER day I began to wonder if it is possible to be a free-lance writer, a good mother and a help to your husband in his business all at

the same time. It was the day our son Hiram disappeared. The school bus took Hiram to kindergarten that morning as usual, and we deposited little Johnny at a baby sitter's. Then we left for Seattle to buy supplies, little dreaming that heavy snow would begin to fall about ten o'clock, and that the school youngsters would be packed back into buses and returned to their homes.

Hi was an enthusiastic member of the North Bend kindergarten. He loved his teacher. He loved the routine, from the first roll-call right on through the daily treat and the "rest period" ("heads down on the arms, children, eyes closed . . ."). The day he first walked out to the school bus and rode off with the "big kids," I stood in the doorway weeping senselessly, as mothers do when they are suddenly aware of important landmarks. I thought that was the moment when my elder son began his education. The same evening I discovered it was the beginning of mine.

"So you started off with roll-call?" I asked eagerly. "You mean Mrs. Rud called the names and everyone had to answer either Present or Absent?"

And little Hi said patiently, "Mama, they could only answer Present."

I recognized my deficiencies at once, and even his kindergarten teacher had a tremor of self-doubt in her voice a month or so later when she telephoned and began the conversation with, "You know, I *do* want to answer all the children's questions. It isn't that I'm trying to dodge any issues. . . . It's only . . . well, has Hi told you about the starfish?"

The full force of Hi's five-year-old curiosity had been turned upon this recent acquisition to the kindergarten window zoo, and I had been pelted with questions concerning it. "Yes, indeed, he's told me about the starfish."

"Well, has there been any one question he's brought up particularly? You understand, I'd tell him, if I only knew. Or perhaps you have some idea where I could get the information?"

"Yes, there is one question he keeps repeating. He wants to know how starfish breathe."

"Breathe!" Silence, followed by an audible sigh of relief. "Oh, thank goodness! I thought he said *breed*!"

To Hi, one of the happiest aspects of school was getting there. Before

the teachers caught on and put a stop to it, he used to hop on to the school bus that took the longest ride round Robin Hood's barn, arriving home some thirty minutes later than he should have.

That first winter, Hi, being a kindergartener, was not entitled to a seat on the crowded bus. "But I always sit on the same girl's lap," he said. "Her name is Lou Ann."

"Is she pretty?" Ed asked.

And once again Hiram had to be patient with his elders. "How would I know, Daddy," he asked, "when we're always facing the same way?"

The day Hi disappeared, the school bus dropped the children off at their homes, but because it was several hours early Hiram's mother wasn't at home to greet him. The driver, a quiet young man named Joe, was quick to notice that the house looked deserted. "Is your mother home?" he asked Hi.

Hi replied instantly, "My mama is working."

"I wouldn't like to leave you here alone," the driver said. "Perhaps you can tell me somewhere else to drop you off."

But all Hi could think of was that he was going to get one of the best rides on the school bus he'd ever had.

It was certainly the longest—Hi was lucky enough to be on the bus that covers a hundred and three miles every day. Eventually, he got a seat right behind his hero, the driver, Joe. Joe talked to him, and gave him chewing gum and sweets, and the party got more exclusive at every stop. For three hours, through one of the worst blizzards for forty years, he had a whale of a good time.

Meanwhile, word that the schools had closed early caused a general alarm at the *Record* office. For three hours, Ort in his car and Hermia on the telephone covered the territory, arousing teachers, friends and baby sitters. Through it all the superintendent of schools held calmly to the correct solution. "Where would you be if you were a small boy?" said the big red-headed Norwegian, who had dealt with a good many boys of all sizes. "Riding on the school bus, of course."

When Hi's bus completed its world tour about one-thirty that afternoon, the superintendent was waiting in his car to deliver our supremely happy son to the *Record* office.

AFTER Hiram's three-hour bus ride, I chided myself as a mother. Admittedly, our boys didn't seem to fade on a diet of foods I could prepare quickly. ("My wife is a good cook," I overheard Ed say to a friend. "A real fancy dinner takes her fifteen minutes, but an ordinary meal she can prepare in a hurry.") And our clothing was clean: I did the washing at night, and more than once hung it out in a back yard illuminated by the headlights of the car. But there is no "home life" for youngsters whose father works at the shop seven days a week and whose mother pedals an Addressograph instead of a sewing machine.

Now I can see that our little boys enjoyed a special kind of home life in reverse, at the shop. They frequently ate lunch there and, if an afternoon nap was indicated, they were bedded down on Ed's stack of newsprint, and covered with coats and sweaters, while the job press banged out a lullaby. Ed and I spent more hours with our children than most parents ever do and the environment, inky and noisy as it was, didn't hurt them a bit.

The modern mother is endlessly patient, lest she "reject" her children. She shields them from knowledge of financial or domestic worries, lest they lose their sense of "security." She puts her children's desires ahead of her own, lest in her selfishness she "frustrate" them. And if the beast in her occasionally gets the upper hand, she suffers from a sense of guilt. But our children gained in independence what they lost by having the nest pulled out from under them. They knew the cost of engravings and the volume of advertising and the most recent repair bill for one of our priceless mechanical heirlooms. They developed a healthy respect for work, an understanding of the sweat behind their allowances and picture money.

Hi was six years old when he first asked, "Daddy, did we get enough advertising this week?" His way of describing the villain in a film he and Johnny had seen was, "He was a bad man. He killed people, and he didn't even pay his bills!"

The boys observed from the start that their parents were always most tired on Paper Day; boisterous as Hi and Johnny might be the rest of the week, on Thursdays they walked quietly and kept their voices down. They accepted the fact that Ed and I were human beings, not resentfully,



but with understanding, and learned early to think of someone else.

Nor did it hurt them to work at the shop themselves. Once they were both old enough, the boys frequently spent the afternoon at the shop, burning waste-paper, sorting out leads and slugs and collecting sweepings of metal for the casting machine. We didn't pay them. We gave them money for other chores, many of them less deserving of pay than these. At the shop they were to share the load as partners, and we would not put a price on that. Nor did we say, "You must work so many hours. . . ." If they were to learn anything at all from this experience of ours, let it be that the man who is his own boss gives up the right to stop work on the last second of the last minute of the forty-hour week; he works until the work is done. The measure would not be "How long?" but "How good?" More good training—and we stuck to it, though their help often enabled us to do a job in just a bit more time than it would have taken to finish it without them.

COMPLIMENTS were many and complaints few from the readers who filed in during those first months, but one word of criticism always threw us into a fit of blues that twenty of praise couldn't pull us out of. "You changed everything round. I liked it the way it was," one reader would say; and the next, "We just about stopped reading the paper, but

now you've made so many changes we're enjoying it again." When a subscriber stomped into the office and issued an ultimatum of some kind, Ed and I consoled ourselves with the quip we'd heard another country publisher make: "You have to be read to be wrong."

It was possible to find a good deal to complain about in the *Record*. But our subscribers weren't consistent. The man who laid us out one moment was the one who bought fifty copies of the paper when he left on holiday; he was going to visit friends all through the Middle West and he wanted to show them how much better *his* home-town paper was than *their* home-town paper. The woman who announced in the presence of six other customers that she had no interest in the paper had come into the office to pay her subscription two years in advance.

Not all our first experiences were shadowed by our early difficulties. Nothing could obliterate the joy of living in the country and doing business in a small town. The people of the Valley would have been amazed to know how often delight settled too suddenly in big lumps in our throats. Among the delights was our first church supper, when we realized the advantage of living in a heavily Scandinavian community. The ladies were obviously accustomed to feeding loggers and each plate contained the nutritional requirements for a man eight feet tall.

Then there was our first meeting with a local minister. He was a man of the cloth, all right, but that day it happened to be a bright-red logger's shirt. The rest of his outfit consisted of an unclerical assembly of knee boots, work trousers and disreputable felt hat. A pipe was between his teeth and he leaned over the counter, hat on the back of his head. I didn't realize it, but he was making a formal visit. As he left, Ed said, "It was nice of you to call in at our place."

The minister grinned. "I have 'a place,' too. Why don't you return the compliment?" and with a friendly wave he was gone. The Snoqualmie Valley version of the ministerial call.

Then there was the time our first "mechanical difficulty" struck. Our witching hour—the hour our papers were delivered—was four-thirty Thursday afternoon. By then the afternoon mail had been distributed, and everyone who came to the post office expected to find his *Record* tucked into the pigeon-hole with his letters.

On this particular Thursday the newspaper folder gave one last monumental squeak and collapsed in a torpor. No amount of coaxing could arouse it. There were three hundred papers still unfolded, and mailing time was literally minutes away. So we organized assembly-line fashion and folded and trimmed three hundred newspapers by hand. The superintendent of schools came in to say hello to his wife and, seeing our predicament, rolled up his sleeves and joined the line. The postmaster was afraid we wouldn't finish on time so he raced over to the shop and folded papers, too. "I'll work overtime tonight," he grinned, "so Uncle Sam won't be cheated." And he did.

Can you imagine the postmaster of New York City rushing over to help get the mailed edition of a paper out? The superintendent of the schools of four towns has an important job to worry about. But when the last *Record* was folded, addressed and mailed, he straightened up, looked at the clock and exclaimed, "*We made it!*"

ONE DAY a clean-cut young man, and I knew instantly a shy one, opened the office door, hesitated and, obviously relieved to see no one but me, proceeded slowly to the counter.

"I want to put an ad in the paper." He looked at me hopefully. "But I don't know how to say it."

"You just tell me what it is you want to sell?" I said.

He looked a little uncomfortable. "Well, it isn't that," he said. "What it is, I'm just out of the services and I live with my sister and brother-in-law. What I like to do is dance. I don't know any girls round here so I thought I'd put something in the paper, asking for a dancing partner."

"Wouldn't it be better to get out and meet some girls, and choose a dancing partner yourself? Your sister and brother-in-law must have friends. . . ."

"That's just it," the young man said mournfully. "Their friends are married. All they talk about is their new television set, or their new baby, or how to pay for them."

I had to suppress a sympathetic grin, and at that moment the dangerous desire to play Miss Lonelyhearts was born. I reached for a classified-ad form and a pencil. "How about this?"

Respectable young man would like to get in touch with girl who enjoys dancing.

He read it slowly, out loud, and I was rewarded by a great big smile of relief. "Gee, that's swell!" he said. We added his brother-in-law's telephone number—8732. He should have informed me then that he wasn't going to tell anyone, even his sister and brother-in-law, about placing the ad.

It attracted a lot of attention, a little island of excitement in a full page of pigs for sale and baby sitters wanted. Everyone wanted to know who had placed it. Some telephoned the *Record* office. "Sorry, I cannot give out that sort of information," I said again and again, feeling sillier every time. The more resourceful ran a finger down the columns of telephone numbers in the little local telephone book until they came to 8732.

The brother-in-law! A married man, and he has such a sweet wife and they always seemed to get along together. . . . All his friends wondered why he was advertising for a dancing partner and they didn't mind asking him. He was angry enough to break the editor in two and when he turned up at the *Record* office he looked big enough to do it.

"You talk to him," I whispered to Ed in the back shop. "You explain how it happened."

"Oh, no," Ed said feelingly. "You composed the ad."

"Coward," I hissed.

"He's not so likely to hit a woman," Ed assured me.

I made a face and went into the front office. Ed's prediction was correct. The unfortunate brother-in-law looked as if he wanted to slug someone but he held himself down to a few words, selected from what I guessed to be a pretty full vocabulary. That was the end of it, as far as the *Record* was concerned. But I heard indirectly that it went on for some time at No. 8732. If the brother-in-law was angry because everyone thought he had advertised for a dancing partner, his wife was even angrier; she had thought he had, too.

FRIDAY was sometimes a bad day, simply because it came after Thursday. But one Friday that first year promised to set a record.

The night before, we had received an unusual number of "Thursday calls"—telephone calls from readers who didn't like something and had to tell us about it right away.

In the morning mail was a little pink slip from the bank. It informed us that our account was overdrawn and noted that they would have to charge us one dollar for breaking the bad news.

"We print these slips for them at seven slips for a cent," Ed said sadly. "And buy them back at a buck apiece."

"And today's pay-day!"

I meant for everyone else, of course. Neither of us had received a pay cheque since we bought the business. Ed said firmly, "We'll pray something good comes in on Monday."

"And I'll make out pay cheques as usual."

"Absolutely." Ed grinned weakly. "You don't suppose we could talk them into cashing them somewhere else, like, for instance, San Antonio, Texas?"

There were other diversions that day. Promptly at five o'clock our current printer, Mr. Toski, appeared at the front desk. He grinned toothlessly and, once he had his pay cheque in hand, he left.

Snarling Mr. Jenkins had left or been fired—it was a delicate point—some time before, but we soon discovered that there were tramp printers aplenty. They were of varying degrees of skill and sobriety, with no money, no wives and no references. They stayed a few weeks, perhaps a few months.

We watched through the window as Mr. Toski turned sharply into the open door of the nearest tavern. Ed turned to me. "I don't know what we're going to do now, but you look tired. You need a change. Take this order of letterheads down to the Congregational Church in Carnation. The drive will do you good."

"You do it. You're more tired than I am."

"That's just it. I'd fall asleep at the wheel."

So with the printing order on the back seat, I headed down the Valley. I found the minister, the Reverend Walter McGettigan, sitting in his study, a cubbyhole which had apparently been filled with papers, books, pipes and Bibles and then stirred up with a spoon. He unfolded, grinned

and shook hands. "Here's your stationery," I said, thrusting it at him.

"Good. Swell. Glad you came down. Let me show you round."

"Oh, no, I can't spare the time. I've got to hurry back."

"Mm. . . ." The minister studied me briefly. What he saw was a woman with circles under her eyes and a costume she had apparently leaped into from a distance of six feet. "Mm . . .," he repeated, while I jittered from one foot to the other.

"You like to play the organ?" he asked suddenly. He knew about my Christmas present, the little reed organ, for it was his church board who had sold it to Ed.

"Love to!"

"Ever play a Hammond? There's a beauty in the church."

"No, really, I couldn't. . . ." I backed away. The suggestion that I do something other than work threw me into a panic. "I've got to hurry. . . ."

The minister said firmly, "Forget it. So far you've hardly completed a sentence without the word 'hurry.' Now, come on, . . ." and he took a firm grasp of my arm and half pushed me out of his study down the path and into the church.

"Here's the light switch," he explained, "and here's the key to the organ. You hold this button down, so, and this one here, so, and then you let this one go. Now, there's the foot pedal, to make it louder. . . ." I was probably murmuring something about hurrying when he ambled out, whistling. At the door, he called over his shoulder, "Turn off the lights and the organ when you've finished. And remember where the switches are, for the next time you come. The church is always open."

The interior of the chapel was cool. One light shone over the altar, another across my hands, groping over the organ's intricate keyboard and miraculously finding a tune. I began with hymns, moved on to symphonic themes. I didn't play well, because I don't know how; but with each tune some inner knot came untied, some invisible wire loosened. I played for an hour, and by the end of that time I knew we had been right to buy the *Valley Record*. I knew we would make a go of it. Another and better printer than Mr. Toski would come along. . . . My fingers launched gaily into "Yankee Doodle," and I wound up my



hour at the organ in a blaze of chords and runs. I turned off the organ, flipped the light switch and, suddenly rather sheepish, wondered if the not too religious selection I had just polished off had carried into the minister's study. I all but tiptoed towards the car. But I need not have worried. Through the open window of his study I heard the Reverend McGettigan whistling. And he was whistling "Yankee Doodle."

ON A WARM summer day the banker opposite smiled pleasantly and said, "Hello, Ed." As far as I could determine, that was the only reason that after nine months in the Valley my husband began talking about building a home of our own. "We don't want to spend another winter in a rented house," he said.

"Now wait a minute. . . . How will we *pay* for it?" I was beginning to wish that the Powers who were overseeing our affairs would write me some new lines.

"Why, honey," Ed said in a puzzled tone of voice, "we haven't even



got a plan for a house yet. There's *still* plenty of time." That was about the first of July. The first week in August we had the land, two acres of meadow right at the foot of Mount Si. Grey crags pierced the clouds four thousand feet over our heads. The Snoqualmie River flowed between us and the mountain's base. Behind us lay pastures and groves of alder and fir.

Sometimes we packed a picnic supper, sat in the middle of the meadow and, chewing, looked up at the mountain.

"I love it here," I sighed, with my mouth full.

Ed nodded. "So do I. But I'd love it more if there were a house on it. It can get darned cold round here in January."

About the tenth of August Ed called in a young builder named Barney Phillips. On a piece of typing paper he quickly sketched a house with three bedrooms, a living-room, a bathroom and a kitchen. "Could you build that house for me, Barney?"

Barney squinted at the pencil sketch. "Sure. Just watch."

We were to pay so much when the foundation was laid, so much more when the walls and roof were up. Receipts were good at the shop, a cheque came in for a magazine article I had sold, and we were able to keep up. We moved in before the carpenters had moved out. The house was a far cry from the pictures I had cut out of magazines. But it was our own, and it was in the right place. October—just one year since we had assumed ownership of the *Record*. I sighed. "I never dreamed we'd have a home of our own so soon."

Ed had grown thoughtful, which I should have recognized as a bad sign. "The house is too small," he said.

"I like the house!" I cried.

He didn't seem to hear me. "Just as soon as we can, we'll add a bigger living-room, with windows to the ceiling, looking right up at the mountain. And there should be another bedroom——"

"Ed!"

He grinned. "Happy first anniversary, sweetheart!" he said, pulling me down into the chair beside him. I should have told him he was crazy. But it slipped my mind.

THEN it was our second Thanksgiving in the Valley, and this time we had something to be thankful for! We were going to eat turkey instead of pork chops. And we were going to go home at noon. "Progress!" said the eternal optimist I had promised to love, honour and obey. The side of the picture he chose to look at was truly a bright one. Our subscription list continued to grow. With our new equipment we were turning out more and better commercial printing. Yes, we had made progress, and in only fourteen months.

The picture had another side. After a year, we still had a big debt. But Ed knew the figures better than I did. If he could grin and say, "Progress," I had better learn to grin back.

When we moaned about help problems now, we meant help in the mechanical end of the business. In the editorial department our course was steady—even taking into account our correspondents.

To a country editor, a correspondent is a housewife who writes about the doings in her own community. She gets her "scoops" over the

telephone in the kitchen, she writes them in pencil on any kind of paper she can find, and she often has to wash the piecrust off her hands before she starts work. Ed put me in charge of these reporters. He suggested that I drive round and visit them.

In some ways, our correspondents were all the same. They were all friendly, they all knew more about the Valley and the *Valley Record* than I did, and they all offered to resign because "you'll probably want to look for someone good—after all, you come from Chicago." One of them had been writing for the paper for eighteen years. She was now composing wedding stories about young people whose birth announcements she had written. Her name, to people of all ages, was Flossie.

Flossie fretted about getting us every single "doing"—every visitor, every pinochle party, every car trip into Seattle. If the morning mail brought us her news, the afternoon delivery was apt to contain a frantic note asking, "Did I write up Mrs. Sarno's news? You know how she is. And did I spell her cousin's name right?" She worried particularly about finishing her news before the rural carrier came along. There was always some important bit she received by telephone five minutes before he was due. Again and again her envelope of news contained a scribbled note, "Hope you can read this. I'm writing it while Julius (the rural carrier) is waiting. Please forgive handwriting. . . ."

Writing about Grange meetings and church suppers for a country weekly is not the way to earn even your first million. But Flossie paid the light bill, and bought a piano for her son, and paid for his music lessons. And old subscription files prove that, even when her earnings were only a dollar or two a month, she always paid for her own subscription.

When I announced that *Record* correspondents would hereafter get their *Records* free, Flossie was more defiant than pleased. "I've *always* paid for my paper," she said, and three times a letter from her contained three one-dollar bills and three times I sent them back before I won the point. Flossie, being British by descent, lost every one of our battles except the last one. She accepted the subscription, all right, but every year thereafter she gave in return a box of home-made preserves. Wild-blackberry jam, plum jelly, peach preserves, apple butter, pickled melon

rind, mint jelly with the leaves right in it—I couldn't have bought them in a store for five times the price of a subscription.

Flossie's juniors on the staff, women who had written for the *Record* for only eight or ten years, were like her. Every one of my business calls ended at the kitchen table over a pot of fresh hot coffee and a plate of home-made cakes. One day, I visited four correspondents; when I got back to the shop a truthful account of my day sounded like the menu for a Scandinavian smörgåsbord. Theoretically I was supposed to teach our correspondents how and what to write. "Look at that!" Ed would say. "Mrs. Buchmeister passed away June 30 and was buried Saturday, June 26." Even the Linotype operator had been startled by this one, for in capital letters she had written afterwards, "NO WONDER SHE DIED? ? ? ? ? ?" There were others, almost every week.

"John Riley and Sam Duncan left town this week," a correspondent once reported. "They are to be induced into the Army." Another sent us an item about a local boy who made a trip to Chicago and telephoned a local girl enrolled at Northwestern University. The story read, "While in Chicago, John Winters paid a nice call on Margaret Mathews, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Mathews by telephone."

The simplest part of my job as boss of the correspondents was hiring and firing. They never did anything to fire them for, and they did the hiring.

The first time it happened, I was nonplussed. A correspondent decided to move into Seattle. I heard about it from the woman she had selected to replace her. Another of our reporters gave up her job because of poor health. Her note of resignation said, "My neighbour, Mrs. Turner, says to tell you she wants to write the news so she started this week." In time I got to like this editorial matriarchy. It saved me considerable worry. Except for the day I stood on my own feet, hired a new correspondent, then found the retiring reporter had also hired a new correspondent. I took a leaf out of Solomon's book and divided the territory amicably in two.

I hired our next replacement by telephone. She mentioned that she was still at school and we could pick up her news at the principal's office every Monday. I covered the mouthpiece, whispering to Ed, "She's a

high-school girl. Do you think we ought to hire anyone that young?"

Ed shrugged. "Your department, dear. . . ."

So I hired her, sight unseen. On the appointed day I went to the high school. No Cedar Falls news at the principal's office. Her name was not on the enrolment list. Had I tried the junior high school?

"Oh, *no*," I objected. "She can't be that young." But I did drive to the junior high school. No, she wasn't a student there—how about the grade school? I didn't believe it, but it was true. Our only local representative in a community of several hundred people was practising penmanship in the back row of the sixth grade. (We found out she needed the practice.) But she turned out to be a pretty good correspondent. Her mother could spell, her father could type and her sister knew what was going on. She's the only reporter I know who blew her first pay cheque on bubblegum.

I daydreamed about replacing three or four of our correspondents with one well-trained newspaper-woman; so for a time we had a journalism-school graduate on the staff. Her tenure of office will be remembered for ever by the town of Carnation for the day she telephoned the Carnation fire department for news.

She found two telephone numbers listed. One rings the department office; the other is a special hook-up ringing the telephone of every fireman in town. She chose the latter. Volunteer firemen dropped whatever they were doing, grabbed their coats and raced to the phone. One of them was ill in bed with flu, but barefoot and weak he got to the phone, too; and all twelve firemen heard simultaneously the businesslike voice of our journalism graduate: "Hello, this is the *Valley Record* calling. Have you any news for the paper this week?"

Soon after I took over the correspondents, Margie, our book-keeper, who drew pay as mailing department and also as receptionist, gave notice.

"Don't worry," I said airily. "I'll take over her job."

Ed looked sceptical. "I don't see how you can write and keep house and do so many different jobs at the shop, too."

"All it takes is careful scheduling," I retorted.

Finally Ed agreed. After that we lived by schedules and lists of jobs. It made for efficiency, of a sort, if doing every job at a dead run is

efficient. If a friend from out of town dropped in for a chat he found himself talking to the tops of our heads; we were looking at our watches.

When I took over Margie's job, Ed suspected that no schedule in the world would make a book-keeper out of me. Luckily, he kept a sharp eye on my efforts to take Margie's place, and within two weeks we were advertising for a book-keeper.

But I made good as a mailer, though Ed didn't quite trust me with anything that had a motor. He bought a treadle-type addressing machine and I was the motor. "This thing is so simple," he said kindly, "I don't think you can possibly do anything wrong."

Addressing two thousand papers a week for a hundred and fifty-six weeks comes to three hundred and twelve thousand times I pushed that treadle down. Soon I began to claim, sometimes loudly, that the mailing department never made a mistake. Lucky for me that no one noticed the day a stencil stuck while I kept pushing papers through. Lucky, too, the man named Lee Lewis, if he needed something to start fires: he received eighty-three copies of the *Valley Record* that week.

MEANWHILE, in the back shop, Ed again fell back on his theory that if he couldn't find a man to do a job, the only way to get the paper out was to do the job himself.

When the Army called-up the apprentice who was doing the press work, Ed stepped in and said, "I'll run the press."

A press run normally took about two hours. It was noon when Ed climbed to the pressman's platform, flipped the switch and slid the first sheet of paper into the big press. Instantly there was trouble: the paper persisted in gluing itself to the ink rollers. When it was still jamming at two o'clock, I said, "Stop for a while, Ed. You haven't eaten anything."

Ed shook his head. "I'm not hungry."

"Can't you make him stop?" Olga whispered. "He looks ill."

But Ed would not give up. "I've got to learn sometime," he said doggedly, as the paper caught again. At six o'clock I went out to the restaurant, and brought back a hamburger. Ed ate it because I climbed up on the platform beside him and held it under his nose.

He finished the entire press run just a few minutes before midnight.

He got down very slowly, as if every joint and muscle ached. His face, despite smears of ink, looked pale and haggard. He walked to the water tap, drew a glass of water and took the aspirin bottle down from the shelf. His hands trembled as he shook three tablets into his palm.

"Thank goodness that's over," I said. "Now you can go home."

Ed shook his head. "I've got to write the editorial."

I was worried, and hence exasperated. "You've got to get some sleep!" I said crossly. "You'll be ill!"

Ed grinned. "That's a fine way to congratulate me in my hour of triumph. I've just learned to run the press."

"You can't do everything. It worries me. . . ."

"I'm doing what I've got to do. Cheer up. You look gloomy."

I didn't say it, but it was on my tongue that I would not look so gloomy if he did not look so ill.

In December Ort, our advertising salesman, told us he had been offered an opportunity too good to miss, and would be leaving after Christmas. "I'm not going to replace him," Ed said. "I may not be worth my salt in the back shop, but advertising is right in my line."

As the *Record's* ad salesman, Ed set a new record in low pressure. He liked to call on businessmen, because he liked people. The only part of selling advertising which Ed disliked was mentioning anything about an ad.

"Call on Dan Thomasen?" I'd ask.

"Yes, had a swell talk. He's put in a new line."

"Is he advertising this week?"

"Well, I don't know. He might. He didn't say."

"Ed, listen, didn't you ask him?"

Ed shook his head. "He knew what I was there for. If he wanted an ad, he would have told me."

The first night Ed got home from the ad round the car was loaded like Santa's sleigh. A copper-bottomed frying-pan—he had called at the hardware shop. A nylon slip—he'd been in the lingerie shop. A bicycle horn, groceries, gramophone records. "Just doesn't seem right to leave a shop," he explained sheepishly, "without throwing some business their way."

It was bad enough for him to shoulder the difficult job, worse still to



add it to so many other burdens. "It must be wonderful to have so much variety in your work," a friend wrote. But by two o'clock in the morning, the only variety Ed was in a condition to appreciate would have been that of going to bed on time.

I WAS at home, working on my writing one morning in January, when the telephone rang. I recognized the voice instantly. Calm as it was, it brought a funny tight feeling to my throat. It was our family doctor.

"Don't be alarmed," he said. "We've got your husband here at the hospital. He's resting comfortably. Could you come over straight away?"

"Resting comfortably. . . ." I'd heard that expression before.

"He was taken ill at the office," the doctor said gently. "Don't be frightened. But come, as soon as you can."

I dropped the receiver. Sometimes my old wreck of a car ran, sometimes it didn't. "Please, God. . . ." I heard myself say out loud as I stepped on the starter. The motor turned over, stopped, then responded

with a roar. At every turn, every intersection, I recited each move—slow down, now look to the left, now signal. “Keep your head,” an inner voice pleaded with me. “Ed’s never had a sick day in his life. He’s been working too hard, but he can take it. . . .” And another inner voice cried, “But how long can he take it? He’s forty-four years old.”

I must have presented anything but the picture of a woman “keeping her head” when I finally reached the hospital—running into the waiting-room in a pair of faded blue jeans and an old plaid shirt, looking wild-eyed and maybe a little bit silly.

The doctor met me in the corridor. It was disturbing to hear him choose his words so carefully. “He’s all right, he’s doing fine,” he kept repeating as he told me what had happened. Two of the men from the shop had brought Ed to the hospital. They reported that he had complained several times that morning of a sharp pain round his heart. When they suggested he should go home, he had flatly refused. “I can’t relax until the paper’s out.” Then suddenly he doubled up with pain and blacked out. When he regained consciousness the two men half carried him to the car. He was clutching at his chest and could hardly speak, but he did manage to whisper, “Don’t tell Charlotte.”

“It could be a perforated ulcer, or a heart attack,” the doctor was saying. “But I haven’t been able to find anything organically wrong. I suspect his real trouble is nervous exhaustion.”

“Where is he?”

“Right down the hall, in that little examining room. Now remember, we’ve got him under sedation. Don’t be disturbed if he doesn’t sound natural. Be calm and cheerful, for his sake.”

Ed was awake, or at least awake enough to hear and see me. He tried to smile. His face seemed strained; the pupils of his eyes were dilated and very black. I said something like, “Well, for gosh sakes, what’re you doing here?” in that too-bright, too-cheerful voice I’ve always resented in nurses. He said something, but his voice was so weak I couldn’t hear him. I leaned over the bed, and he repeated his question. “Everything going all right at the shop?”

“Everything’s fine.”

“Are you sure they got the changes into that hardware ad?”

I nodded emphatically.

"Don't let them put both grocery ads on the same page."

"I won't."

I thought my husband might be dying. He was as scared as I, because he thought so, too. But the two of us sat in that little hospital room and talked about every finicky detail of that week's issue of the *Record*. Finally Ed whispered, "You'd better get down to the shop." I was at the door when he signalled to me to come back. "As soon as the paper is out, will you come back to the hospital?"

"Darling, of course. . . ." I leaned down to kiss him, and he murmured drowsily against my cheek, "Good, I want to see a copy of the paper."

At noon the next day the doctor called me and said, "You'd better come and get your husband."

"But I thought he was to stay in the hospital for a week."

There was a smile in the doctor's voice. "The idea was to force him to rest. Believe me, he's not."

When I got to the hospital the doctor repeated his opinion that there was nothing physically wrong.

"Then how could he suffer so much pain?" I asked.

"Nervousness," the doctor said. "The nerves round his heart and stomach caused a contraction of the blood vessels, so that it was hard for his heart to pump blood through them. Result was severe pain. When he relaxes, the heart and blood vessels function normally and the pain ceases. Keep him in bed for at least two weeks. Then what he needs is a good holiday." Ed hadn't had a holiday for three years. To say the word seemed daring; to think about it, an extravagance. "But of course a holiday is not a permanent solution," the doctor continued. "There's one basic cause of his illness, and it's the thing you've got to correct. He's working too hard; or rather, worrying too much. Work itself may not hurt him, but the tension he feels over it will."

"Two weeks in bed," I repeated, as if saying something often enough and calmly enough made it come true. "And then a good holiday."

ON MARCH 7, two weeks before our holiday was to begin, Johnny went down with mumps. I was so worried about his being well enough

to travel that I scarcely noticed that Ed was sporting a bad head cold. Then Hi was taken ill. Mumps.

With two days to go, Johnny and Hiram were both back at school. But that day Hi fell playing a game during break, and hit his head on the concrete. "A slight concussion," the doctor said. "Keep him in bed today, and very quiet." March 19.

The next day Ed's cold was worse but Hi was better. I got everything packed, cleaned out the refrigerator, took the house plants to the neighbour's and made arrangements for her to feed the cats. Tomorrow, tomorrow, we would go on holiday.

I woke up the next morning with the left side of my face swollen into a painful half-moon. I stumbled to the telephone. And literally stumbled. On the rug just below the telephone the big black mother cat was occupied in producing a new litter of big black kittens. That did it. I burst into loud sobs. Somehow I managed to dial the doctor's number. "Doctor," I wailed, "Doctor, come quick, our cat is having kittens!"

"Oh, I see," the doctor said, after a scarcely perceptible pause. "Anything else? Wasn't your holiday to start today?"

"Yes, and now we can't! It's *me!*"

The doctor asked me several questions. "Doesn't sound like mumps," he concluded. "Doesn't sound contagious. Look, for heaven's sake, put that fool cat outside, and all the rest of you get into the car and *leave*. Don't wait another minute."

But we had to wait until the paper was out, so it wasn't until four-thirty that afternoon that we started out. Hi was on a pile of blankets on the back seat, nursing his concussion. Johnny was catching Ed's cold. My face was so badly swollen I could scarcely open my mouth or swallow. There was no hunting for a good motel that night; we pulled into the first one we came to. Ed carried Hi in and laid him gently on the bed. The little boy's skin felt tight and hot. I had packed a box of food, and I began to cook supper for Johnny. "Hungry?" I said to Ed.

He shook his head. "You?"

"I couldn't swallow if I tried."

But Johnny had not lost his appetite and soon the room was filled with the smell of beef sizzling in butter.

Johnny was sitting down to a steak sandwich while Ed and I were looking bleakly at each other when Hi's voice split the unhappy silence. "Say, Mom," it said, and it was the heartiest, healthiest voice in the world. "I smell something good. What are you cooking?"

Ed and I tripped over each other to get to the bed. Hi was sitting up, bright-eyed, wide awake. "I feel just about starved," he said. "You got any steak?"

"I'll cook it for him," said Ed, with a slap-happy grin.

"No, I will!"

"Let's both cook. And say, let's make enough for all of us."

Thus began our first holiday. It was a good one.

SEPTEMBER 1951—the last lap of our first two years as country publishers—was a memorable month. Hiram advanced to the second grade, Johnny came of age and went from kindergarten into "real school." Hi began his first music lessons, and I began a long term of standing over him to make sure he practised. These were landmarks in our life at home. At the shop, all was well.

There seemed nothing ominous in the fact that Hi celebrated the end of his first three weeks in the second grade by "going down with something." After school that Friday he was pale and listless. Company was coming for dinner. I slowed my course from stove to sink just long enough to ask if he felt all right.

"Just tired, Mama. And I've got a headache."

The complaint sounded odd on the lips of a seven-year-old boy. I gave Hi an aspirin. Voluntarily he went to his room and to bed, which also would have struck me as strange if I hadn't been rushing to finish dinner preparations. When I went into Hi's room the next morning, Johnny was sitting at the foot of Hi's bed with a colouring book. Hi was unnaturally still and his face was turned to the wall.

Johnny looked up. "Hi's ill," he said. "He's been sick."

Mechanically, I went through the routine. The thermometer—it read a hundred and three and a half. A damp towel for his forehead. A bowl. One gains a feeling of security by going through these old, familiar measures.

Then Hi gripped my hand with sudden intensity as he whispered, "Mama, my back aches, just terrible."

High fever, aching joints. Once again I ran to the telephone to call the family doctor.

At the time he was the only doctor in the Valley, doing the work of four men. I knew how busy he was, how reluctant to make a house call unless he felt it was absolutely necessary. So when he said, "I'll be right out," I was convinced my fears were well founded.

After he had examined Hi I followed him out of the room. Bluntly, I asked what the boy had. "It's too early to tell," the doctor said thoughtfully. "Call me immediately if he shows any new symptoms. Watch especially for difficulty in swallowing. . . ."

Ed stayed at home all day Saturday, ironically, his first Saturday at home since we bought the newspaper. We hardly mentioned the bindery work stacked up for him at the shop, and his reason for leaving it undone we did not refer to at all.

As the day progressed it was clear that, whatever Hi had "gone down with," he was getting well fast. By nightfall his temperature was almost normal and he had eaten and enjoyed two meals. When both boys had fallen into peaceful sleep, Ed and I collapsed into the living-room chairs and admitted how worried we'd been.

"Thank goodness, *that's* over," I breathed.

Ed nodded. "I'll have to work at the shop tomorrow, to do that bindery job." He leaned back, eyes closed. At last he said, more to himself than to me, "Only thing is, I wish I knew what it was Hi had. . . ."

Monday, Hiram was restless at home; Wednesday, on the advice of the doctor, I sent him back to school. He seemed a little tired that evening, but nothing more. Thursday being Paper Day, I told him he could help deliver newspapers.

I remember the desk where I was sitting, even the direction I was facing, when I first noticed something was wrong. The paper was out; Hiram walked past me to get his jacket. He was limping.

"Hi?"

"Yes, Mama."

"Does your shoe hurt?"

He looked down at his feet. "Why, no," he said, genuinely surprised. "Nothing hurts." Ed came up behind me—I could feel it.

Hi looked at me in a puzzled way. "What's the matter, Mama? Is there something wrong?"

"I . . . I thought you were limping. . . ."

"Huh?" He laughed. "Gosh, no," and he turned and walked away from us towards the front door. He was limping, badly.

Polio. . . .

THE COUNTY public-health nurse knew how to be kind. She was matter-of-fact without being blunt, sympathetic without frightening me. She filled in her report, and then drew a large yellow sign from her brief-case. "Everyone in the house, except the breadwinner, must remain in quarantine for three weeks after the day Hiram first ran a fever." And as she left she tacked the sign on the outside of the kitchen door. Groceries would be delivered to the back door, but I was to wait until the delivery-man had gone before I brought them in. The milkman would leave paper cartons, which I was to burn.

Though I had charge of Hiram's painful therapy during the following weeks, it was Ed who suffered most. Ed had to meet people and answer questions. He had to keep his mind on his work, when it was filled with one question—how crippled will Hiram be? At night, I fell asleep quickly, exhausted by many tasks, while Ed lay sleepless and worried.

It is no wonder that, of the four of us, he was the only one who cried. Not at home, but in town, when someone asked him, "How's the boy today?" There on the main street, with a friend's hand on his shoulder, the wondering and the worrying suddenly grew too big, and he burst into deep and racking sobs. The man led him into a deserted alley. "Don't be ashamed of crying, Ed," he said to him. "My God, man, don't be ashamed. . . ."

Before Hiram's illness we had heard of only one case of polio in the Valley. The signs may have been before us a hundred times—the twisted back, the leg brace, the useless arm—but we had not had the eyes to see. Every day one of those who extended sympathy added, "We've had

polio in our family, too." The woman whose tall, handsome son walked straight because he wore one built-up shoe, and we had never guessed it. The shop-assistant who had waited on us for two years without mentioning the fact that his little sister was living in an iron lung.

We discovered the community of sorrow and the community of love for children. One friend sent Hi a present only a sensitive and patient man would have troubled to prepare. Ed came staggering into the kitchen one evening under a tremendous cardboard box. Stalks, leaves and vines were spilling over the top. He carried it into Hiram's room, and set it down by his bed. "Bill Hronek said he knew you fellows came from a farm in Illinois," he told the wide-eyed boys. "So he sent you a garden."

That's just what it was. From his own garden, Bill had taken corn, squash, carrots, pumpkins, tomatoes, beans, apples. But the corn was in its green sheath on a five-foot stalk. The squash and the pumpkins were "growing" on vines he had pulled up by the roots. The beans, the tomatoes were on whole plants. Even the apples had to be picked off limbs Bill had cut from his apple tree.

At the first word that the editor's son was ill, Bill had scratched the name "Hi" on the dark-green surface of a growing squash. As the squash grew, the letters had swollen and hardened. When Hi looked at the "garden," he found a squash with his own name embossed on the side. He stared at it in wonder. "How did he do it?" he asked again and again. "Just how in the world did he do it?"



Both Ed and I were aware of the possibility that Johnny might contract polio, too, and had talked to the doctor about it. If he was going to contract it, we would know a week to ten days after Hiram had had a fever.

Ed and I needed no calendar to tell us how many days had passed. On the seventh day after Hi's first fever we began counting time by hours.

On the eighth day, Johnny complained of a headache. By nightfall he had a little fever. The next morning his temperature had gone up to a hundred and two degrees. "Mama, I got an awful headache," he said.

Another report to the health department, another week of waiting. If Johnny was to be crippled, it would show up in a week's time.

A cheerful, aggressive salesman from the Linotype company came through Snoqualmie that week. He found Ed in the dark corner which served as a private office.

"This is the day!" the salesman began. "Yes, sir, this is the day I'm going to see that you get the one thing you need in the world!"

Ed looked up. He had been staring at some bills without seeing them. "What is that?" he asked mechanically.

"A new Linotype!"

Ed looked back at the papers under his hand. "What I need," he said, "is courage."

"Ha! What kind of talk is that?" The salesman laughed heartily. "You're the fellow who has so much courage all the other weekly publishers think you're nuts. You're expanding. You're going places. That's why you need a new Linotype, a machine that will——"

Ed said simply, "Jim, I have two boys. They both have polio."

The salesman froze. The next hearty laugh, already rising in his throat, ended. "Sorry," he said at last, and his voice was husky. "I talk so much I never know when to shut up. I'll come back another time."

Ed said, "Jim, I didn't mean to be rude."

"Why shouldn't you be?" The salesman had walked away, but now he turned back. "It's true about your having courage. You always had it. Don't let go of it now."

The long week of waiting passed, and when the doctor examined Johnny he found no stiffness, no limp of any kind.

By then, on the doctor's advice, we had taken Hi to the Children's Orthopædic Hospital in Seattle. Neither Hi nor Johnny knew they had had polio. "Orthopædic Hospital" meant "sick and crippled children." What would Hi's reaction be?

He was curious, and that helped. But he said defensively, "I'm not crippled!" and he made us promise we wouldn't tell anyone at school where he was going. Once at the hospital he was cheerful, and amused by the white gown the nurse instructed him to get into. He grinned at me. "I'm sure glad none of the kids at school can see me," he said, "wearing this funny dress."

We still worried, though, about what his reaction would be to learning that he had had polio until Hiram himself reassured us. The day we took him home, he referred so freely to his leg and to the "kids" with polio who had been his playmates that Ed asked, "Hi, did they find out what kind of illness you had?"

"Oh, yes . . ." Hi did not look at us as he answered. "I had polio. But it was a *slight* case, Daddy, a very *slight* case."

Johnny returned to school, but for weeks Hiram stayed at home. Gradually the injured leg grew stronger. By Thanksgiving we could see that we would not have to settle for a "slight limp," but that Hiram could play football, after all. Finally, he was strong enough for school. I talked to his teacher beforehand: "He has said over and over again that he doesn't want any of the kids to know where he's been or that he had polio."

The teacher said, "I'll talk to the children. You have no idea how understanding seven- and eight-year-olds can be."

When Hi went back to school, he went down the corridor leading to his classroom with a determined stride, trying desperately to control his limp. The boys and girls spilled out of the room. "Hi, Hiram!" they sang out. "Hi, Hi!"

Hi blurted out, loud and clear, "I had polio but I bet you wouldn't even know it because I'm not crippled at all. See?"

The teacher smiled at me over the children's heads.

"MONEY isn't everything," a not very original friend on the old

Chicago Times once remarked, to which Tom Howard, the chief photographer, retorted, "You're absolutely right. Health is one per cent." But when we approached our third Thanksgiving as small businessmen, it was health for which we were most thankful.

On Thanksgiving morning the four of us lingered at the breakfast table and Ed called to order one of our periodic family meetings. "I'd like to have a discussion," he said, "about what we have to be thankful for. Johnny?"

Six-year-old Johnny rolled his eyes to the ceiling, finally intoned solemnly, "I'm thankful Mrs. Gallanar never makes me stay after school."

"Hiram?"

"Can I be thankful for two things?"

Johnny burst out, "Hi, that isn't fair! I was only thankful once!"

Ed raised a hand. "Order!"

"It seems to me," Hi began carefully, "that what all us kids have to be thankful for is Thanksgiving itself. You get a special big dinner and you don't have to go to school." He turned to his brother. "Look, John, you have that thankful as much as I do."

"Oh, all right. Take another thankful, then, Hiram."

"I'm thankful I didn't have that bad kind of polio," Hi said in a small, small voice.

For a moment none of us said anything. Then Ed cleared his throat loudly. "I'm thankful for something. Anyone know what it is? . . . Give up?"

Hi and Johnny nodded, and Ed said, "All right, I'll tell you. I'm thankful because I can spend all day Thanksgiving thinking about what I have to be thankful for."

"You're not going to work at the shop at all?"

Ed grinned. "I could. There's plenty to do. But I won't."

Hi said soberly, "Dad, does that mean things are better than they used to be?"

Ed looked thoughtfully at our eight-year-old son. "Yes," he said, "it does. We've got good workers and we've got a big new press and it's sure to keep running. Now, you run along and play."

The boys jumped up and headed for their rooms.

I gave Ed a rueful smile. "Do you mean what you said?"

"Sure, I mean it! Every month we have more subscribers and fewer creditors."

"Remember Ote Sloan? He said it took five years to prove you were here to stay."

Ed shrugged. "No law against doing it in three. We're in debt, I know. But we *are* paying everything off, little by little. As long as business comes in, and we have the men and equipment to do the job, we're bound to come out all right, in time."

"But if" I stopped short, ashamed of myself for beating the drums of gloom on Thanksgiving Day. What if there were a strike at the lumber mill? my frightened little mind whispered. What if our printers left? Less than a year had passed since Ed had been half carried to the hospital, and it had been a hard year.

THE NEXT summer, Ed and I decided to send Hi to the Y.M.C.A. camp on Orcas Island for a week in August.

Hi lost his heart to the idea when we told him, but we didn't want him to think that good things come easily, especially if he was to own his own business some day, so we said, "The week at Camp Orkila will cost twenty-five dollars. We'll pay half of that, but if you really want to go you'll earn the other half."

There are not a great many ways in which an eight-year-old can earn twelve and a half dollars, and we didn't suggest any. It was Hi who heard that the berry farm down the road needed pickers and it was Hi alone who walked to the farm and applied for the job.

"You're two years below the age limit," the owner said, "but I'll try you for one day. If you can pick as clean as the grown-ups and don't fool about, you can come back again."

At the end of three days, Hi had earned two dollars fifty cents. The next day it rained.

"They don't pick in the rain," the little boy cried. "How am I going to get enough money for camp?"

Ed said, "Why don't you go out and sell *Record* subscriptions?"

"Oh, could I, Dad, honest? Would you let me, Dad, honest?"

Reversing our previous stand about not paying the boys for work in the shop, Ed said, "I'll pay you seventy-five cents commission for every new subscription you get."

So the next morning Hi set out. He had a receipt book and a pencil in one overall pocket, a big scribbling-pad in the other, and an armload of *Records*. A brown paper bag containing his lunch hung from his belt, secured by a big safety-pin. In his head was a sales pitch he had worked out himself. Ring the door-bell. You don't take the paper? Here, let me show you one, because if you see it you'll want to subscribe. You do take the paper? Then how about a gift subscription for someone else?

I never saw my small son in action, because every morning I took him to the end of some country road and drove away. He walked all day. When the big round aluminium watch he carried said five o'clock, he asked at the nearest house to use the telephone. He called the *Record* and I'd drive out and pick him up.

In the morning, he cut quite a figure as a salesman. His step was firm and his smile, over the top of his armload of papers, was confident. By five o'clock he was a tired, dusty little boy. Some people had given him cakes, others had shut the door in his face. But he never came home without at least one new subscription and soon he was asking, "If I earn more than half the money, do I have to pay more than half?"

When the magic day came, Johnny and I took Hiram into Seattle to catch the bus for camp. He was fully equipped: sleeping-bag, suit-case, and an old Girl Guide mess kit which he held upside down so that no one would see the insignia. He had five dollars spending money in his jeans, and he had earned every penny of it. At the very last moment when the bus driver started up the motor, his face appeared at an open window and he called down to little Johnny. "You do my work for me at the shop," he said—and was he a little wistful?—"and I'll use half my spending money to buy something at camp for you."

His head disappeared into the boyful, joyful interior, and the bus pulled away.

EVERY MONTH now we were gaining new readers. In one three-month period eighty-six new subscriptions had come in, all unsolicited since

except for Hiram's drive, we never held any kind of campaign. Almost every week advertising revenue was higher than it had been the corresponding month of the previous year. In short, business was good.

Then the main gear of the big newspaper press, our beautiful, big, black three-thousand-dollar baby, snapped.

It had been years since parts for that make of press had been manufactured. Yet here it was Monday morning, and on Tuesday morning we had to start printing the paper. "We could arrange to print it on someone else's press," our foreman suggested.

Ed said grimly, "We'll print it on our own."

Sheer stubbornness supported him for the next twenty-four hours. He drove two hundred and forty miles to get the gear repaired and by ten o'clock Tuesday morning the press was running as usual.

The foreman at the shop where Ed had taken the gear had looked at him curiously. "You're knocking yourself up over this. Who do you work for, anyway?"

"Myself," Ed had replied tersely.

When the press crisis was past, I began to drop hints again that it was time to remember the doctor's orders to relax, for Ed was once more wound up like a wire spring. But every hint I dropped seemed to land with a loud crash. When I asked him not to bring home armloads of work, and please to come home at a reasonable hour, my anxiety showed through and I was as subtle as a fast right to the jaw. I always started out "suggesting" and ended up nagging:

"Remember what the doctor said? You *have* to cut down. You are deliberately ignoring doctor's orders. . . ."

"The doctor didn't explain how I was to get the work done in less time. Besides, I'm as healthy as a horse."

Naturally these "discussions" contributed less than nothing to Ed's peace of mind. The more nervous he became, the more I worried and the louder I said, "Stop being nervous!"

Then, for a few months I tried being a serene "good sport." Instead of waving "doctor's orders" in my husband's face, I said simply, "You're the boss, dear. Whatever you do is all right with me." For though Ed worked more than was good for him and came home late, the way I had

been helping him back to health would soon have discouraged him from coming home at all.

In April, the death of a friend from a heart attack filled me with cold fear. What was I doing, standing by cheerfully while Ed dug his own grave? Unless he changed his pattern of day-to-day living, he would surely suffer a second heart attack, and, if that didn't kill him, then the third or the fourth one would. It wasn't a matter of being a "good sport." It was a question of saving my husband's life. I wanted Ed to be happy but, much more than that, I wanted him to live. If he wouldn't follow doctor's orders, I would force him to.

For a month I stuck to it. If Ed was late for supper, I telephoned the shop and insisted he come home straight away. I threw so many phrases at him like "for my sake" or "if you won't think of yourself, then do it for the kids" that I managed to extract several promises from him. But if the *laissez-faire* attitude was a poor way to keep your husband alive, subjecting him to a constant fire of "don'ts" was surely worse. What then? What *could* I do?

One day Ed came home from the shop early. He came into the house quietly, and his hands were empty of work. He threw me a weak grin and a quick hello, and went straight past me to the bedroom. He was lying down when I came in, and he was flat on his back, staring at the ceiling. "Are you all right?" I asked anxiously.

He nodded. "Just tired." His face was grey.

"Hungry?"

"No. I just want to lie here for a while."

I turned to go. Ed's voice, with a funny restrained sound to it, called me back. "I probably ought to tell you. We don't have a Linotype operator any more."

"What!"

"Today was Olga's last day at the shop. Her husband wants her at home." He added wearily, "And I don't think there's an unemployed Linotype operator in the state of Washington."

I wanted to comfort him but I couldn't say empty Pollyanna phrases. Slowly, slowly, we had pulled ourselves forward, keeping up payments, improving the business, winning over our critics. I might cry, "Oh, I'm

so tired!" but Ed's courage was indestructible. Ed *must* have courage; so much courage he would have it to spare when I lost mine. Ed without spirit, Ed heartsick and ill—what was the use of all we'd done, if to win the fight we were losing something so much bigger? He lay so still I thought he might have fallen asleep. I tiptoed to the window and reached up to pull the curtain.

"No," Ed said. "I don't want to sleep. Come and sit here beside me. I want to talk to you . . . about the shop. There's a lot about running a small business which you don't know. You should begin studying these things, so that you could run the business without me if you had to."

"There's no need to discuss any such thing!" I cried it like a scared child.

"We never know. I'm older than you are."

"But it will be years and years before" My voice trailed off, caught somewhere behind a lump of fear.

Ed said gently, "There's a big scribbling-pad and pencil in that drawer there. There are some things I'd like you to write down. Please, darling."

I groped for the pad and pencil. "I wouldn't want to keep the business, I wouldn't want to have anything to do with it . . ." and added, choking on it, "without you."

Ed said, "Remember what we used to say, that it was a family business, that all four of us were in it together?"

"Yes, yes. . . ."

Ed touched my hand. "Then it would be up to you to keep the paper going until the boys were old enough to take over."

He hesitated a moment, but I could not speak. He patted my hand, and began matter-of-factly, "First, the matter of insurance. . . ."

Slowly, I began to write.

SURELY heaven's board of directors includes a vice-president in charge of those fools who say, We'll buy a little business all our own. About June 1, 1952, this worthy looked down and mused, "There's that silly couple in Snoqualmie again. Better let them come up for air." And so he took his celestial foot off our necks and things got better.

By the end of the week, we had found a Linotype operator. He said

his name was Ray Darrow. We didn't ask why he had left his last job, or anything else about him. I simply said a little silent prayer that now Ed would truly relax and stay well and that I could cease being such a darned fool about the way I tried to help him do it. Once I had thought I could save his life, but now I knew the most I could do was help him save it himself. But how?

Help came, most unexpectedly. I was in the grocer's, contemplating a shelf of tinned goods but frowning mightily because I had just been thinking about Ed. The doctor's wife came by, pushed her shopping basket next to mine and exclaimed, "My, what a worried look. Did you leave your grocery list at home?"

There are moments when one's private mind is so full the gentlest tap brings the contents flooding out. The doctor's wife had six children, and I hope she wasn't in a hurry to get home to them, because her greeting and her sweet face made me want to tell her things, and, praise be, I told them all!

When I finally came to a breathless halt, she was smiling sympathetically. "I understand very well. There must be hundreds of thousands of wives in the same spot you're in. I don't think you were 'all wrong' when you were concentrating on making Ed's life pleasant. An over-tired, nervous man needs a peaceful home. You weren't 'all wrong,' either, when you tried to force him to follow doctor's orders. You would be foolish to pretend, as Ed is pretending, that he doesn't need to. But you can't force a man to give up one way of living. All you can do is offer another way of living—and make it so attractive he'll adopt it voluntarily."

"How?" I exclaimed. "It sounds fine, but impossible."

She smiled. "A wife has to be clever," she said softly.

For days my head throbbed with good intentions. Slowly these truths emerged. First of all, I had been talking about Ed's "way of life" as if it were entirely separate from my own. "You've got to learn to relax," was the order I handed him twice daily, like a pill. But how relaxed was the atmosphere I created at home? Ironing, vacuuming, cleaning the cupboards, doing the washing—I saved all these chores for Sundays and evenings and I went at them like a slap-happy prize fighter. I

enjoyed it. It was a change from the sedentary "thinking" kind of job I had all day at my typewriter. But what was I contributing to my tense husband's peace of mind by filling his quiet moments at home with the swish, roar, kerthump and bang of every electrical appliance in the house?

The worst of it was that I had been so proud of myself. Flattered by the exclamations of friends, "My, I don't see how you get so much done, and you write books, *too!*" I had failed to see that anyone can "get so much done" if getting it done is more important than the wear and tear on the family.

The Sunday following my talk with the doctor's wife I resolved not to do a single bit of housework, even though the sight of the laundry basket made me quiver, and my left hand had to keep my right hand from reaching for the dust mop. During Sunday breakfast there had usually been little conversation because I had been busy drawing up a list of jobs for that day. The moment I downed eggs and bacon, I jumped up from the table and began to do the dishes. At that Ed would go into the living-room to a pile of office work. "Why, you didn't even finish your coffee!" I would scold, partly because I knew he should relax but more particularly because I wanted to wash the cup.

The day of rest would henceforth start off with a leisurely, old-fashioned breakfast, and this first Sunday of my resolve began that way. It was a peaceful meal; long after the food was gone, we talked. I reheated the coffee, filled our cups and we talked some more. Suddenly Ed burst out, "Great guns, we've been sitting here for an hour and a half!" He looked at me apologetically. "Have I been keeping you? . . ."

"No, no," I said quickly, repressing the urge to begin tidying up in all directions. "There's nothing I have to get to just this minute." It was the utter truth. We hadn't run out of clean clothes or dishes, and why was a little dust under the bed insupportable on Sunday when it hadn't been hurting us all the week?

"Good," Ed said contentedly. "We have so little chance to talk."

Later that day Ed brought out the forbidden office work, and the word "Don't!" rose in my throat automatically. Somehow I managed to swallow it whole. It was a grey, rainy afternoon. Why shouldn't he

work at home for an hour or two, unless I had something better to suggest? So I tried to think of something. I couldn't. My imagination (and wasn't that what the doctor's wife had meant by "being clever"?) was rusty from disuse.

I had substituted rules: "Let's make a rule that you never go to the shop on Sunday." But no matter how bright and sunny his easy Friday afternoon might be, it had never occurred to me to drop whatever I was doing and say, "Come on, let's stop work and go for a hike." Why? Because to me Friday had always been a workday. I would have to do better.

It was a warm July afternoon when I sent this particular resolution on its solo flight. Work on my novel was going at top speed but about mid-afternoon I pushed back the smoking typewriter and drove to the shop. Ed was at his desk, frowning over a stack of invoices.

"Would you take me out to the golf course and teach me how to play golf?" There, it was out.

Ed looked astonished. "Why, I . . . well, of course I've always wished you would take up golf." He had spoken about it again and again, but I'd always shrugged off the suggestion. I had not seen how rare and wonderful was the husband who actually wanted his wife with him even on the golf course.

Now Ed shook his head. "I've got to finish this stuff today."

"Throw it in the car and we'll take it home with us," I said, though the old, worried wife was reeling at what the new, clever wife was saying. "I'll help you tonight after supper."

"Well, I don't know. . . ." But he followed me out and soon we were on the first tee and I was holding one of Ed's clubs and Ed was saying, "No, hands a little closer together, that's it. Now, here, get the feel of that club, it's like a pendulum. . . ."

He was out in the fresh air, he looked as happy as a kid at Christmas and he was following doctor's orders! I hardly heard what he was telling me, but I think it was something like, "Look, honey, the important thing is, you've got to relax!"

I found that every day contained moments of relaxation, if we slowed down enough to see them. In the course of making business calls, Ed

and I sometimes passed the grade school during break. One day I said boldly, "Let's stop and watch the baseball game. That's Johnny at second base, and Hi is fielding. . . ."

Ed looked at me oddly. "We've got to get back to the shop. We're late already."

"That's silly! The break lasts only fifteen minutes."

Ed grinned. "I know it's silly. I was just repeating what you said to me a few months ago when I suggested we stop."

"Oh." It was a small "Oh," too.

"Look at the arm on that kid!" Ed burst out. "Say, that was a nice catch Hi made, too. I think I'll start practising with the boys. Evenings, for half an hour. Sunday afternoons. . . ."

Ed and I got more out of that break than the youngsters did. Fifteen minutes thinking about our children and baseball, instead of a difficult printing order. It was as good as an hour's nap. "Let's do this again," Ed said as we drove away, and we have, many times.

It is possible to be well and happy, even if you own your own business. The answer, not only for Ed but for every other breadwinner, lies not in getting away from it all but in learning to go through the ordinary work-day without twitching nerves or pounding heart.

ONE AFTERNOON Mr. Hall, the banker opposite, dropped in at the office. He went back into the shop, surveyed the machinery, then walked into the new wing we had recently added with the bank's help and observed, "Concrete blocks, eh? Cement floor . . . fireproof . . .



mmm. . . ." Ed stayed by his side and answered all his questions, but he finally quipped, "Well, when do you foreclose?"

Mr. Hall's blue eyes twinkled, but his voice was solemn. "Nothing like that, Ed," he said. "I came over to tell you not to worry. I know what you already owe and I know how much cash you've got left. I can see you've got a programme worked out in your mind, and it's good for the whole Valley. So you work out how much money you're going to need to carry it out, and then come and see us. We'll have it for you." He looked thoughtfully at Ed. "You've been here three years. Only three years." He shook his head. Then this man, who had built one little bank into a system of seven, added: "I could never have done what you've done in only three years."

Three years ago, we had been that couple from Chicago. Today, well, there was Mr. Hall, grinning and waving as he walked back to the bank, and his last words to Ed were, "Now remember, Eddie, we don't want you to worry."

HIRAM was nine years old that winter. One evening he was bubbling over with an incident at school. His teacher had been locked in her classroom, and Hi and one or two other third-grade muscle men had been called upon to get her out.

"Couldn't we put something about it in the paper?" Hi asked his father. "My teacher would sure be surprised."

It was then an idea came to Ed which proved to be pure inspiration. "Hi, I wonder. . . ." He studied the little boy's solemn face and big brown eyes. "Would you like to write for the paper if you had to do it every single week?"

The brown eyes widened. "Gee," Hi exclaimed softly.

"You'd have to sit down with Mama or me, and dictate the things you want to say because it would be a lot of writing, even for a third-grader. You couldn't be silly, and you couldn't skip a week just because you didn't feel like writing."

Hi nodded eagerly. Ed grinned. "All right," he said, "let's sit down and have a family discussion."

So the four of us took our places at the kitchen table. Because of a

column of birth announcements called The Tri-Corner, it was unanimously decided to name Hi's column The Hi-Corner. Monday night would be dictating night. Subject matter would be up to Hi. Johnny would be his leg-man, keeping his ear to the ground for newsworthy items. Ed outlined the fundamentals of journalism as they affected a nine-year-old: be brief (he explained at length); include as many names as possible; choose subjects of interest to the greatest number of readers.

"How about me?" little Johnny piped up. "It just seems like I don't do enough work for the paper."

"Johnny darling, you sort out leads and slugs, and you sweep out from under the Linotype, and you stamp the dates on to the cuts. . . ." I tried very hard to match the little boy's solemnity. "You are a printer, like your father. Hi and I are only writers, not half as important as you."

"Really, Mama?" He was delighted. He threw himself into his father's arms, and the printers left the room while the writers got together for the first Hi-Corner ever composed.

"While walking from lunch at the North Bend grade school last Friday . . ." Hi began.

By the end of four weeks Hi had raked in more fan mail than Ed and I had received in four years. A few weeks before an election in Snoqualmie, one of the councillors telephoned. "I'm a candidate for re-election," he explained, "and I'd like to put my views before the public. Could I be interviewed for an article in the *Record*?"

"Why, sure," Ed replied. "I'll be glad to talk with you."

"Who said I wanted to talk to *you*?" the city father retorted. "I want Hi to interview me for his column. Then I know everyone will read it."

What to write and how to write it—Hi faced that problem every Monday night and, by solving it, learned a little each week about good taste and editorial judgment. He suffered all the agonies of his literary betters when it came to thinking up the first sentence. He frowned, licked his lips, sighed. There were always several false starts. "Now don't put this down, just let me say it so I can see how it sounds. . . ." When the column was complete, he read it through carefully, and even

if Ed or I had been silly enough to change a word or phrase we wouldn't have got away with it. As Hi put it: "We tell everybody that I write the column myself. If you change anything, then it wouldn't be true any more." The truth, of course, is that if we had changed anything it also wouldn't have been good any more.

Most popular of all Hi-Corners have been Hi's editorials. His column at Thanksgiving was a nine-year-old's credo:

I am thankful to live in America because it is a country that you can live in half decent. Most other countries are a lot poorer.

I am thankful to have a mother and father. In Korea kids don't have mothers and fathers very often.

I am thankful to be able to believe in whatever religion you are in. In other countries that isn't possible.

I am thankful to be able to have playmates and other activities, such as Cub Scouts.

I am thankful to have a brother. Kids that have brothers and sisters will always have somebody to play with.

HIRAM and Johnny were five and four years old when they got their first taste of country journalism by licking two thousand postage stamps. As junior partners they gradually worked their way into the circulation department (selling subscriptions), the mailing department (wrapping papers and carrying them to the post office), the mechanical department (sorting out leads and slugs) and the editorial department (Hi's weekly column). By the spring of 1954 our pint-sized journeymen were ready to invade a new field—commercial printing.

Ed had been teaching them to sort out the individual letters of hand-set type and distribute them properly in the drawer. "All these letters," eight-year-old Johnny mused, searching for the B bin. "I wish I had some."

"If we did, we could be printers, too," his ten-year-old brother agreed, and thus was born the North Bend Printers, Ink.

Ed turned over to our competitors an old hand press, a proof press, and a fine collection of damaged and obsolete type, two printer's aprons, a tin of printer's ink and free access to the shelf of scrap paper.

The first week of April, the North Bend Printers, Ink. placed their first ad in the *Record*:

WE'RE ADVERTISING

To People Who Want
Cheep Printing

My brother John an i got a printing Press free and
we can chisel some cards and paper from the falls printing
Company and that way we can print cheeper.

———If you Want printing dOne cheep we're the kids
that can do it. No payroll, free materials,
no overhead, nO taxes.

WE GOT A RACKET

Hi Groshell

North Bend Printers, Ink. Call 88-1503

When Ed told them they had to pay for their ad they accepted this without argument but also without any noticeable enthusiasm.

"How much?" Hi asked, eyes narrowed.

Ed calculated quickly. "Thirty-six column inches. Multiply that by seventy-seven cents an inch"

The little boys responded like advertisers of all time. "I'm going to get a ruler and measure it myself," said our canny eight-year-old, and his brother said, "Let's make that ad a little smaller."

They received their first job the night the ad appeared. A reader ordered a hundred handbills. "I reckoned on spending one dollar," she said. "And I would like you boys to distribute them, too."

Instinct inherited from some relative other than his father took possession of our small son. "We'd have to charge more than that," Hi said solemnly, "because there is the labour of us two partners and there is materials, too. We will do it for a dollar and a half."

This was the bid that got the job. It took the boys two hours to set the type. Then they ran the press but, since smashed fingers are one emblem of the trade we felt they were too young to acquire, we did not



connect the motor. One boy turned the big wheel while the other slid the sheet of paper in and out of the press. They were grinning through a veritable blackface of printer's ink by the time they had finished.

The founding of North Bend Printers, Ink. did not mean that our star columnist stopped writing, and when Ed brought home an ancient typewriter Hi began typing his column himself.

"I'll give you a twenty-five-dollar savings bond

if you type your next four columns," Ed offered.

Hi had never been paid for *The Hi-Corner*. "Sure, Dad, sure!" he agreed, and little John breathed, "Gosh, how rich can you get?"

Hi spent an hour and a half typing each column, but he earned his defence bond. It was his first real pay cheque. "Just bring the bond home and let me look at it," he asked, "before you lock it up in the bank."

Hard on the heels of this big moment came recognition of another kind. The Washington State Press Club notified us that *The Hi-Corner* had been awarded a prize in the annual newspaper contest and that the writer should be present at the Awards Banquet in Seattle to receive it. It was the first time that a child had taken an award. It was probably the first time, also, that a child attended the Awards Banquet.

Both Hi and his partner, John, went with us, though neither of them knew Hi was to receive an award. They sat up stiffly at the banquet table, both tense with the responsibility of doing the right thing in this roomful of two hundred confident grown-ups. Their clothing worried

them. I had stripped them of blue jeans and jerseys and encased them in gabardine slacks and tweed sports jackets, the first they had ever owned.

When food was served, Hi whispered, "Mama, shouldn't I take off my jacket?"

"No, leave it on, Hi."

"But, Mama, are all these men going to eat supper with their coats on?"

No need describing the moment when the chairman of the Awards Committee arose and in the presence of the best newspapermen in the state read a section of one of Hi's columns and presented the award. Hi stood up, walked to the head table, shook hands and, with a look of wonder on his face I had never seen the equal of, returned to his chair. There was more of it—a lot of applause, for one thing—but I was finding it a little blurry.

Ed reached for my hand, and squeezed it hard. "Our small partners are growing up, Mother, they're growing up."

THAT NEXT summer even I was beginning to say that everything had happened to us that could happen, and that the worst could never happen again. We finally had a good man in the back shop, a printer who was there to stay. My new book was selling like hot cakes, the printing business was good, and we were no longer haunted by the question, Can we make the mortgage payments this month?

I really believed our troubles were behind us as we approached the end of our first five years of business for ourselves. In October the magic line would be crossed and, as our friend had prophesied: "After that, they'll have to shoot you to get rid of you."

The people of our Valley will remember the summer of 1954 for two reasons. It was so cold, rainy and sunless that at least one person quipped, "Nice warm winter we're having this summer." And there was a strike.

This was the lumber strike that paralysed the entire Pacific Northwest from June 21 until autumn. In our Valley it idled eight hundred and forty-five men. We had always known that a strike at the big mill

in Snoqualmie Falls was disaster for the local businessmen. Not only for the grocer and the owner of the hardware shop, but for us.

Monday morning, June 21, the mill whistle did not blow. The silence was an eloquent retort to my feeling that we'd already had every kind of trouble a couple with a small business can have. Where could we find revenue to keep the newspaper going during a strike? Would it all come back, the desperation over money, the almost hourly struggle at the shop?

That afternoon Ed called our employees together. "You people know what it's like during a lumber strike," he said, "and you know what happens to a small business like ours. So you're probably wondering what's ahead. I want to tell you. Just now we've got the best staff in the world, and the best little old newspaper in the world, and this strike isn't going to break up either one of them. I may have to go out and sell printing like I never sold it before, but we're going to put out a paper every week and you're going to have jobs at no cut in hours or wages."

There was relief on many faces, but it didn't touch the relief that flooded through me. Ed was less nervous than he is about selecting a necktie. We had weathered every crisis. We could weather just one more. I hadn't counted on the one after that.

Our Linotype operator, Ray Darrow, left town. We were left with the old question—how were we going to get the paper out?

I worked at home that Monday, and it wasn't until supper-time that I telephoned the shop and the receptionist, in fearful whispers, told me what had happened. I sat down at the kitchen table and put my head in my hands. This was too much. I remembered the advice an old man had given Ed when he was a teen-ager in Billings, Montana: "If you're in a fight, and the other guy knocks you down, you can be sure it was because you weren't ready for him. Get up quick, and if he knocks you down again you can be sure it was a lucky punch. So you get up once more. But if he knocks you down a third time, stay down. If you don't, you're going to get your fool block knocked off—and what's the sense of that?"

And what was the sense of this? I could visualize Ed, pacing the floor,

calling long distance, leafing nervously through aged and yellowing letters of application. Was this the Sunday punch, the blow that was one more than a man can take?

I called Hi and John into the kitchen. "Boys, you have never cooked your own supper," I said, "but, Hi, you're ten years old and, Johnny, you're almost nine. Do you think you could do it?"

"Mama, honest, would you let us?"

"Here's the meat," I said, "and here's the potatoes. You'll find lettuce and tomatoes in the refrigerator. John, take a box of pudding off the shelf and mix a dessert. I'm going down to the shop. I'll be back soon." I hurried out and drove to the shop.

By then I was convinced I'd find Ed in such a state of nerves that the only question would be whether to call the doctor. But when I entered the print shop the first sound that greeted me was not my darling's hoarse cries but the cheery clatter of a Linotype *in use*. Scarcely breathing, I approached the wonderful sound. The man at the Linotype was Ed. Slowly his fingers moved on the keys, there was the click as the mats were lifted, the rapid *tat tat tat* as they dropped, the faint metallic clunk as the line of type dropped neatly into place. If ever I saw a man who was neither nervous nor frightened, it was Ed. "Hi, there!" he called to me. "I've been setting type all day. Look—I finished three galleys." Three galleys—our last operator's output in an hour and a half, but then, had I ever seen that operator with such a wide and happy grin?

"I just heard," I blurted out. "What are you going to do?"

Ed grinned. "Pray constantly and shave once a day."

"But the paper! Today's Monday. You'll be sitting in front of this machine twenty-four hours a day. You can't . . ."

"I'm hungry," he said, unconscious of the voice of doom sounding off at his elbow. "Let's go home and have supper."

It was only six o'clock. We *never* had supper at six o'clock when we were having a Crisis. "Supper, yes, supper," I repeated doltishly.

Ed turned off the machine, rose briskly, rubbed his hands together. "What are we having?"

"We'll have to ask the children . . ." I said weakly.

We drove home together, and Ed was singing all the way.

THIS is a success story, though it has to be a story without an ending, because living happily ever after goes on and on. The strike ended. We found another Linotype operator.

One day last month we passed a landmark: our two small partners received their U.S. Government social-security cards. The boys were at the shop and we shook hands all round, and there was a good deal of kissing and congratulating, too. It was a wonderful moment, but suddenly Ed's face took on a wondering look.

"What is it?" I demanded.

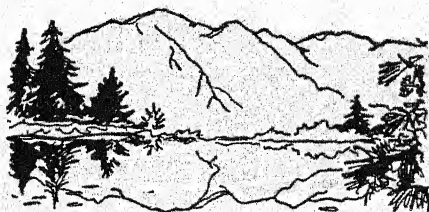
"Don't you know what date it is today?"

I looked at the calendar. "October first, but there's nothing special about . . ." I stopped. October first. On that date, five years before, we had left monthly salaries and security and taken the awful plunge. Our fifth anniversary, and we didn't even think of it! Ote Sloan had said: "If you're still here in five years—boy, they'll have to shoot you to get you out."

In those five years we had had problems. But we had learned that success does not come to the man who has no problems. If nothing ever goes wrong, the chances are nothing ever goes at all, for action brings problems as surely as planting potatoes brings insects. The man of spirit goes after the insects, he doesn't stop planting potatoes.

And so, on that October first, a small businessman and his wife fell into each other's arms, and that's where we stayed for quite some time, while a ten-year-old columnist and a nine-year-old printer kept tugging at us and asking:

"Mama, Daddy. Why did you yell like that, 'We made it!'"





Charlotte Paul

BORN and brought up in the Pacific North-west of the United States, Charlotte Paul studied music in Germany and travelled extensively in Europe before returning to America to attend Wellesley College. While she was there she won first prize in *The Atlantic Monthly* collegiate short-story contest of 1937.

After leaving college she made several visits to Europe and held a variety of jobs from typing to ballroom dancing. She became assistant foreign-news editor of the *Chicago Daily Times* and later roving editor in the Caribbean.

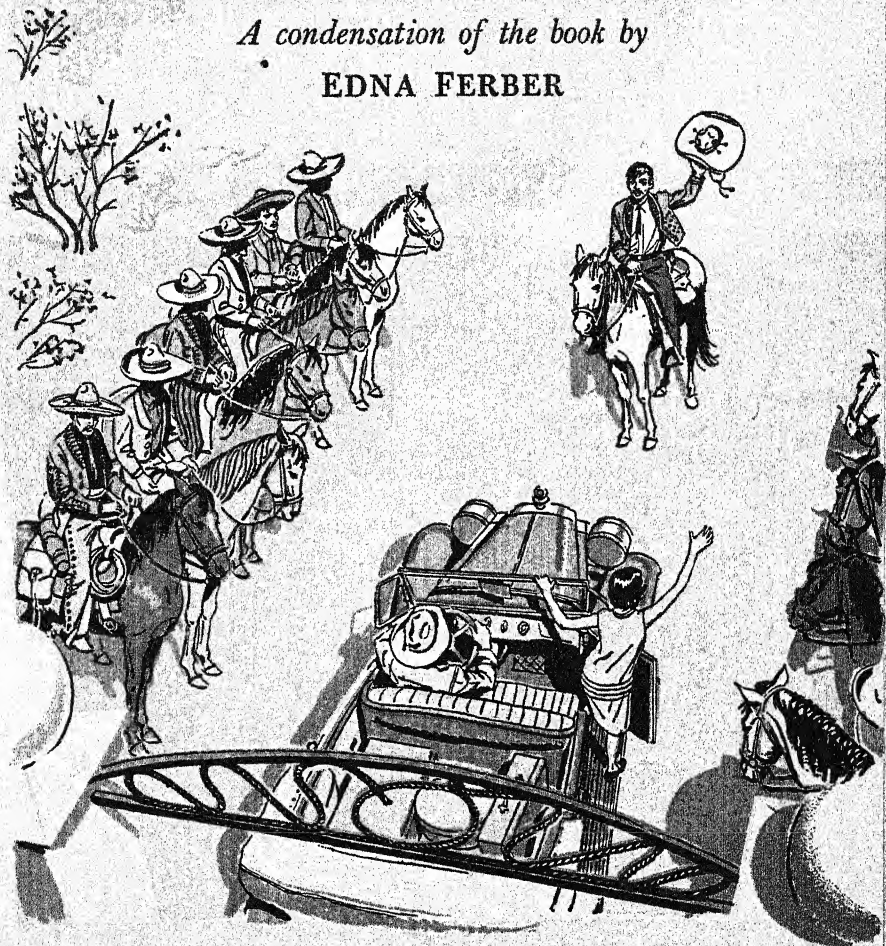
Returning to the United States, she began a successful career of free-lance writing which continued after her marriage to newspaperman Ed Groshell. She has sold articles and stories to many leading magazines and published two novels.

Busy as she is with writing, her two sons and the family-owned newspaper in Snoqualmie, Washington—the entertaining subject of *Minding Our Own Business*—she still finds time to play golf with her husband, to write songs for the local amateur shows and to work in her garden.

Illustrations by Ed Vebell

GIANT

A condensation of the book by
EDNA FERBER



"Giant" is published by Victor Gollancz, London

WHEN Leslie Benedict came as a bride to the two-and-a-half-million-acre Reata Ranch in Texas, she was appalled by the discomforts and the feudal atmosphere that marked her new life. She missed the amenities of her native Virginia, but her fiercest resentment was against the assumption, by her husband and the men around him, that size and power are all-important, that Biggest equals Best.

The novel begins with a typical Texas celebration—mammoth, spectacular—flashes back to the early 1920's, then comes full circle as it takes the reader through the years to the present.

Giant is a book of passion and burning conviction which sweeps the reader along in its rip tide. It is a book of superlatives—a giant of a book in every way.

"A brilliantly descriptive story delivered with a punch which hits the reader between the eyes and holds him breathless to the last page . . . magnificently overpowering." —*The Queen*

"Born to be a best seller." —*The Star*

"A novel as generous and high-spirited as *Giant* defeats criticism . . . demands to be read." —*The Times*

CHAPTER 1

THIS MARCH DAY the vast and brassy sky, always spangled with the silver glint of aeroplanes, roared and glittered with celestial traffic. Gigantic though they loomed against the white-hot heavens there was nothing martial about these winged mammoths. They were merely private vehicles bearing nice little alligator jewel cases and fabulous gowns and overbred furs. No sordid freight sullied these four-engined family jobs whose occupants were Dallas or Houston or Vientecito or Waco women in Paris gowns from Neiman-Marcus, the great Texan department-store; and men from Amarillo or Corpus Christi or San Angelo or Benedict in boots and Stetsons and shirt-sleeves.

All Texas was flying to Jett Rink's party. All Texas, that is, possessed of more than ten million dollars in cash or cattle or cotton or wheat or oil. There were, of course, a few party-goers so conservative or so sure of their position in society, or even so impecunious, as to make the journey by car, choosing to cover the distance at a leisurely ninety miles an hour along the flat concrete ribbon that spanned the thousand miles of Texas from north horizon to the Gulf of Mexico.

Though the pitiless South-west sun glared down on the air-borne and the groundling, it met defeat in the vine-veiled veranda of Reata Ranch Main House. Even the ever-present Gulf wind arriving dry and dust-laden after its journey from the coast here took on a pretence of cool moisture as it filtered through the green and spacious shade. Cushions of palest pastel sailcloth on couches and chairs refreshed the eye even before the heat-tortured body found comfort, and through the day there was always the tinkle of ice against glass to soothe the senses. Through the verdant screen one caught glimpses of a heaven-blue swimming-pool and actually, too, a lake in this arid land. Radios yelped and brayed from

motor-cars and ranch houses, towns and cities throughout the length and breadth of this huge and lonely commonwealth from the Gulf of Mexico to the Oklahoma border, from the Rio Grande to Louisiana, but here at Reata Ranch no such raucous sounds intensified the heat waves. Jett Rink's name splintered the air everywhere else, but not here. It stalked in black three-inch headlines across the front page of every newspaper from El Paso to Bowie. Omnipresent, like Jett Rink's oil derricks straddling the land. At every turn the ears and eyes were assaulted by the stale and contrived news of Jett Rink's munificence.

The JETT RINK AIRPORT . . . gift of JETT RINK to the city of Hermoso . . . biggest airport in the South-west . . . private pre-opening celebration . . . 2,000 invited guests . . . magnificent banquet in the Grand Concourse . . . most important citizens . . . champagne . . . film stars . . . Name Bands . . . millions . . . first Texas billionaire . . . orchids . . . caviar flown from New York . . . zillions . . . lobster flown from Maine . . . millions . . . oil . . . strictly private . . . millions . . . biggest-millionsbiggestbillionsbiggesttrillionsbiggestzillions . . .

Mrs. Jordan Benedict, dressed for the air journey—blue shantung and no hat—sat in her bedroom at Reata Ranch, quiet, quiet. She sat very relaxed in the cool chintz slipper-chair, her long slim hands loosely clasped in her lap. She sat storing coolness and quiet against the time when her senses would be hammered and racked by noise and heat; big men and bourbon whisky, the high-shrill voices of Texas women, blare of brass, crash of china, odours of profuse food, roar of aeroplane motors.

Now, as she sat, little sounds came faintly to her ears, little accustomed soothing sounds. A light laugh from the far-off kitchen wing—one of the Mexican girls. The clip-snip of Dimodeo's garden shears—Dimodeo and his swarming crew who seemed to spend their days on their knees clip-snipping, coaxing fine grass to grow green, and hedges to flower and water to spurt in this desert country. The soft plaint of the mourning doves. The town of Benedict, bustling and thriving, lay four miles distant but here at Reata Main House set back a mile from the highway there was no sound of traffic or commerce. So Leslie Benedict sat very still within this bubble of quiet suspended for the moment before it must burst at the onslaught of high-pitched voices and high-powered motors.

For all the family was going, and all the guests up at the huge Guest House there at the other end of the drive. The big plane was in readiness at Reata Ranch airfield and the Cadillacs were waiting to take them all to the plane.

The giant kingdom that was Reata Ranch lay dozing in the sun, its feet laved by the waters of the Gulf of Mexico many miles distant, its head in the cloud-wreathed mountains far far to the north, its gargantuan arms flung east and west in careless might.

CHAPTER 2

THOUGH they had been only an hour on the road the thought of this verdant haven tormented Mrs. Mott Snyth as she and her husband tore with cycloramic speed past miles and miles of Reata fence and field and range. The torrid wind seared the face of Vashti Snyth and—now that he had removed his big cream Stetson—tossed the little white curls that so incongruously crowned the unlined and seemingly guileless face of Pinky, her husband.

"My!" she whimpered in helpless repetition. "My! It's a hot of a day!"

"March, what do you expect?" The tiny high-heeled boot on the accelerator, the small strong hands on the wheel, the bland blue eyes seemingly focused on nothing in particular, he appeared relaxed, almost lethargic; those eyes saw everything to the right and left and ahead, he was as relaxed as a steel spring.

"Mott, let's stop at the house a minute, can't we?" This massive woman alone called him by his first name though to the rest of his world he was Pinky; she actually gave the effect of looking up at him though her elephantine bulk towered above his miniature frame; and in spite of the fact (or because of it) that she, Vashti Hake, inheritor of the third biggest ranch in all Texas, had years ago committed the unpardonable social crime of marrying one of her father's cow-hands.

"Not if you're going to do a lot of shopping in Hermoso before we check in at the hotel we can't. Mathematically speaking."

"I'm only going to buy a little white mink cape stole."

"How long will that take?"

"Fifteen minutes."

"You said you didn't want to take the plane. You said you wanted to drive because the blue-bonnets would be so pretty. It'll take us another five hours anyway to get to Hermoso. The dinner is seven. How do you think——"

"I'm sick of blue-bonnets. They're right pretty, but I'm sick of 'em miles back. We can leave the car at Reata, hitch a ride to Hermoso in the big plane with Leslie and Bick."

"How do you know?"

"They're taking their big plane. I know. That's why I didn't want to fly down. You wouldn't take the big plane. I won't come down in that little bitty old two-engine job, front of everybody in Texas."

"We'd look good, wouldn't we, just the two of us sitting in the four-engine job holds fifty! Crew of four, gas and all, cost us about five thousand dollars to go four hundred miles."

"What of it?"

"How do you know how many they got going? Maybe they're full up."

"Company of course, up at the Big House. But not more than ten or twenty, usually. Then there's Bick and Leslie and young Doctor Jordy and his wife probably and Luz——"

"Luz! Thought she was at school there in Switzerland somewheres."

"She quit it. Didn't like it."

"Like it! I should think if anybody didn't like it it'd be Bick. Heard her schooling there was costing him a heifer a day."

Vashti pressed her point. "We'll stop like I said, see who's going and all and maybe catch a ride. Look! There's the tower of the Big House. I bet it's crammed with company. We're not a mile away from the ranch."

"No place in all Texas," Pinky announced without bitterness, "is more than a mile away from Reata Ranch somewheres."

Vashti bridled. "We are so! House to house we're more than sixty miles."

"House to house maybe. But fence lines, that's what counts. Fence lines you adjoin as you know well and good. Like I said, nothing's a far

piece from Reata, including Oklahoma one side and Mexico another and the Gulf of Louisiana thrown in. Here we are. My, those palms have took hold. Never know they'd been set in."

Any Texan overhearing this artless chit-chat would have known that these two were talking Texas. Both had had a decent education yet their conversation sounded like the dialogue in a third-rate parody of Texans. This was due partly to habit and partly to affectation born of a mixture of superiority and inferiority, as a certain type of Englishman becomes excessively Oxford or, a Southern politician intensifies his drawl. Each was playing a role, deliberately. It was part of the Texas ritual. We're rich but look how homely we are, just as plain-folksy as Grandpappy back in 1836. We know about champagne and caviar but we talk hog and hominy.

They turned in at the open gateway with the Reata Ranch brand, the lariat—la reata as the Mexican vaquero wove it himself out of rawhide—copied in artful iron as an ornament for the gate-posts. The nose of the Snyth car had not passed the gateway before Ezequiel was out of the gatehouse and into the road, barring the way with his outstretched left arm, his right hand close to his body. The black eyes pierced the windscreen. Then the tense dark face relaxed, the arm dropped, the right hand came up in a gesture that was less a salute than an obeisance.

Pinky Snyth lifted his hand from the wheel, open-palmed. "Cómo estás, Ezequiel?"

The white teeth flashed. "Bienvenido! Señor Snyth! Señora!" He waved them on.

Vashti tossed her head. "About time Bick Benedict got over guarding his country like he was royalty."

"Now, Vashti, you know he tried it and the place was stampeded like a fat stock show."

Up the long drive beneath the date palms so incredibly rich under the white-hot blaze. They stood row on orderly row, green-topped, mammoth, like pillars in a monumental cathedral. Only a brush-country Texan could even dimly realize what had gone into the planting and sustaining of these trees in this land.

Past the old whitewashed adobe school-house, the Big House with its

towers and intricate grillework, past the old carriage house and the vast garage. But no cars stood waiting there, only the vine leaves stirred in the hot wind as the visitors drew up before the Main House and peered towards the shaded enclosure.

Vashti climbed out of the car and went towards the porch, calling "Yoo-hoo!" It emerged a croak from her parched throat. "Leslie! Bick! Where've you all got to, anyway?"

Leslie Benedict emerged from the house, cool, slim; about her a sort of careless elegance. The Paris buyer at Neiman's in Dallas had said of Leslie Benedict that she wore indistinct clothes with utter distinction. The buyer was rather proud of this *mot*. Sometimes she elaborated on it. "What she wears never hits you in the eye. It sneaks up on you. No tough colours, ever. And no faddy stuff. You know. Never too long or too short or too full or too tight or bustles or busy doodahs. My opinion, Mrs. Jordan Benedict's the best-dressed woman in Texas and doesn't even know it. Or care."

Now at sight of her guest Leslie's rather set smile of greeting became one of warmth and affection.

"Vashti! What a nice surprise!"

"Thought you'd all gone off and died."

"Where's Pinky?"

"In the car there. We're so hot we're spittin' cotton."

"I thought it was the others from the Big House. Come in, come in! Something cold to drink?"

"Hot coffee I'd druther if it's handy."

"Of course. After twenty years and more in Texas wouldn't you think I'd know it's always hot coffee?" She called in Spanish to someone unseen within the house. She went to the veranda entrance. "Pinky! Come in!"

"Where at's Bick?"

"He'll be here any minute. Come in out of the sun."

The little man, a Watteau figure in Western masquerade, emerged from the big car. Legs actually slightly bowed like those of a cowboy in a Grade-B movie; the unvenerable white head was a dot beneath the great-brimmed Stetson. "Me and Vashti got to get on, all that

way to drive." This was a cunning opening wedge. "Where's Bick?"

"Out since five this morning. You know Jordan. He's probably down at the hangar now. He's always fussy about the big plane, I don't know why. You can fall just as far from a little one as a big one, but he's always casual about the little ones."

"Mott's the same way." Vashti had taken off one tiny beige slipper and was wriggling her toes ecstatically. "Climbs into the little Piper Cub, kind of slips his foot and shoves off like he was in a kiddie-car. Years back, when we first got a flock of planes and Mott used to fly the kids to school mornings—mmm, coffee!"

Delfina, soft-stepping, concealing her shyness with a childish insolence of bearing. As she placed the coffee tray on the glass-topped table she stared at the two women with the steady disconcerting gaze of a four-year-old, the bright dark eyes making leisurely appraisal from foot to throat encompassing their clothes. Masses of vital black hair hung about her shoulders, her blouse was low-cut, her stockingless feet shuffled in plaited leather sandals.

"Thank you, Delfina," Mrs. Benedict said—a shade too nicely—in English. Her eyes met Vashti's as the girl disappeared.

"New?" inquired Vashti over the scalding rim of her coffee cup.

"Alvaro's granddaughter. I can't do a thing about her hair! She copies the girls in the movies and in the Woolworth's in town. Alvaro asked Jordan to bring her back here to work in the house, she'd got into trouble——"

"Oh well, if you and Bick are going to look after all old Alvaro's sons and daughters and grandchildren and great-grandchildren, all that patriarchal Texas stuff."

Pinky choked over his coffee. "Listen at who's talking! Vashti's always up to her hocks in a Mexican wedding or a birthday or a family rumpus. How's old Alvaro, anyway? Must be pushing a hundred."

"Oh, who cares about who's pushing a hundred!" Vashti, now miraculously refreshed by the strong hot coffee, led up to the purpose of her visit. She peered through the vine leaves, her gaze squinting skyward. "Nice flying weather."

Quite as though she cared about the weather, about flying, about

anything that had to do with this hideous day, Leslie Benedict took her cue as hostess, she said smoothly, "Do you think so? What do you think, Pinky? Some of those fat black clouds look like rain."

"Rain!" Pinky scoffed. "Can easy tell you've only been twenty-five years in Texas. No rain in those clouds. They're just empties coming back from California. Come on now, Vashti. We got to get going. Vashti says she's got to pick up a new fur piece in Hermoso. White mink cape or some such doodah."

"How does it happen you're not flying?"

Hastily Pinky raised a protesting hand. "We better not go into that. Well, I didn't want to haul out the big plane, Vashti wouldn't hear to the little one." The rosy face crinkled in a grin. "They used to be a saying, in Texas a man is no better than his horse, and a man on foot is no man atall. Nowadays a fella without an aeroplane has got no rating, might as well be a Mexican."

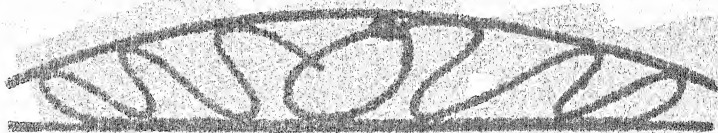
At last. "Don't you want to leave the car here and fly down with us?"

"Oh, Leslie!" Vashti's tone of astonishment would not have deceived an amœba.

"Well, say, if you're sure it wouldn't crowd you none——"

Quickly Vashti clinched it. "Love it! Just purely love it, and thank you kindly. Who all's going? Who's over at the Big House, h'm?"

As Leslie Benedict answered there was a half-smile on her lips, a rueful little smile. She thought, This is ludicrous I suppose. Twenty-five years ago I'd have said it was too fantastic to be true. When I introduce Pinky and Vashti, these good and kind people, there are no terms in which I can define them. They are of a world unknown outside Texas. Pinky. As unlike the cowboy of the movies and the Western novel as one could be in the likeness of a man. Small, his bone structure as delicate as a woman's. In the dust-clouded past he had come to Texas from nowhere. They had devilled him and ridiculed him with their rough jokes and rougher horseplay. He must compensate for his miniature frame and his innocent blue eyes and pink cheeks. So he had been tougher, more daring than the biggest and most daredevil cow-hand in the brush country. The small hands were steel-strong, there was no horse he could not gentle. He had come to the Hake ranch—the vast Double B



—possessed of nothing but the saddle he carried under his arm—his ridin' riggin', in the ranch idiom. And Vashti Hake had actually married him on the rebound—this big booming woman who had been a big awkward girl—this daughter of old Cliff Hake, now long dead. Two million acres of ranch land, oil wells, cattle, millions.

"Who all's going, Les? Who's over at the Big House, h'm?"

"Well—uh—there's Cal Otter the cowboy movie star. You know—with the white hat and white buckskin chaps and white horse and all those white teeth. And the King and Queen of Sargovia and Joe Glotch the ex-heavyweight champion and Lona Lane that new movie girl and her husband and my sister Lady Karfrey—"

"She here! When'd she come?" Vashti interrupted.

"Leigh flew over from London on Tuesday and flew on here next day. And Jordan's brother Bowie and his sister from Buffalo—"

"Uh-uh! Trouble. And who else?"

"Well—the Moreys are here from Dallas, and Congressman Bale Clinch, and Gabe Target and Judge Whiteside and a South American ex-Presidente who's Ambassador now—I've forgotten which country—and Tara Tarova and some others—and Cal Otter's taking his white horse." The absurd list gave her a mischievous pleasure.

"On the plane?" Vashti asked somewhat nervously.

"It's all right. In the forward compartment. He's used to flying. We'll be up only an hour or two, Jordan wants to show the King and Queen something of the ranch from the air, they're thinking of buying a few thousand acres up north in the Panhandle. They spent a day or two at the King ranch. Jordan says they bought some of Bob Kleberg's prize Brahman bulls."

Pinky ruminated a moment. "Don't know's I ever met a king and queen. Socially, I mean. Course, they're out of business now, those two, you might say. But what do you call them, talking to them I mean?"

But before Pinky could benefit by an elementary lesson in the etiquette of royalty a battered jeep crunched to a jolting stop in the driveway as though it had been lassoed and a gaunt girl in boots, jeans and a fifty-dollar shirt swung long legs round the side. "Hi!" she said. She was hatless, her sun-bleached hair was tied back into a sort of horse's tail. She entered the veranda, she went through a routine that was the perfection of pretty manners. So-and-so Mrs. Synth . . . this-and-that Pinky . . . see you at the party it sounds horrible doesn't it . . . where's Dad . . . I'm off. . . .

"Luz, they'll all be here in a minute. Why don't you go with us in the big plane?"

"Oh, Ma! That hearse!"

"Amador's packing the lunch. We're eating on the plane. Don't you want something before you go?"

"How you going?" Pinky asked, though he knew well enough.

"I'm flying the little Snazzy. I'll stop on my way to the field and grab a hamburger at Jerky's place."

Pinky wagged his head knowingly. "You taking any passengers in that foot bath?"

"Don't be roguish, Pinky."

"He ain't going to the rumpus, for God's sake!"

"He wouldn't be seen dead at it."

"He sure would if he went," Pinky asserted, quite solemnly.

She was off with a neat little clatter of scuffed boots.

The eyes of the three followed her out of sight. They looked at each other. Silence hung momentarily between them. Vashti was not given to silences.

"Honey, she ain't serious about that farmer, is she?"

But before Leslie could answer Pinky cut in, deftly.

"Now, Vashti, look who's talking. You married a low-down cow-hand, didn't you?"

"Cow-hand is different. This fella works afoot. Telling everybody,

going round lecturing at Grange halls about this grass and that, blue grama—yella bluestem—side-oats grama—telling Texans been ranching all their life and their fathers and grandfathers how to run things. He don't even behave like a Texan. Cornell University! Texas U. ain't good enough."

"What you think of Bob Dietz, Leslie?" Pinky asked baldly. "Might as well ask out, now Vashti's been and messed things up. Me, I got the opinion that boy is an unexception."

Very quietly Leslie Benedict said, "I think Bob Dietz may change the whole face of Texas—its system and its politics and its future."

Vashti Snyth gave a little yelp of shock. "Why Leslie Benedict, he ain't got five hundred dollars cash to his name!"

"I'd have said a hundred," Leslie replied quietly.

Now there came an acceleration of sound and movement from within the house and without. It was like the quickening of the tempo in a discordant modern symphony. From the dim interior of one of the rooms along the veranda emerged young Jordy Benedict with the Mexican girl who was his wife. There was between them a resemblance so marked that they might have been brother and sister. His hair was black but hers was blacker. He had inherited his from Leslie, his mother; she from centuries of Spanish forebears. Her skin was camellia-white, the Texas sun had hurled its red rays in vain. In their bearing, too, this young pair had a strange diffidence in common. So young, so beautiful, they bore themselves with a shy uncertainty. The girl was dressed in black, very simple in cut, a strand of small pearls at her throat; and that throat and the face above it seemed almost translucent, as though a light were glowing behind them.

They knew their manners. Hers were quaintly old-world in their formality. She had been born in Texas, as he had been. Her father and mother, her grandfathers and grandmothers, her great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers and their forebears had been native to this land long before the word "Texas" had ever been heard. In a vortex of aeroplanes and bourbon whisky and Brahman cattle and millions and little white mink capes and Cadillac cars and oil rigs and skyscrapers this girl moved and spoke in the manner of an ancient people in an ancient land.

"Hiyah, honey!" yelled Vashti as though addressing a deaf foreigner. "My, you sure look pretty."

To this the girl said nothing. With grave dignity she gave her hand to Vashti Snyth, to Pinky.

"Hiyah, Jordan!" Pinky pronounced it Jurden, Texas fashion. "You and Juana flying down to the big blow, Doc?"

"No," Jordy said and turned away. He sat then on the arm of his wife's chair and flung one arm across the back. There was something defiant, something protective about the gesture. "We're driving—if we go."

Leslie put her hand lightly on the girl's knee. "Juana doesn't like flying. But then," she added, "neither do I, really. I never have learned to take it for granted. I suppose I belong to the generation that still thinks the motor-car is a wonderful invention."

There was a quick drum of horse's hoofs and as Bick Benedict leaped off his horse a Mexican boy sprang from nowhere to mount the brisk little animal and, wheeling, clatter off to the stables.

There was nothing regal, certainly, in the outer aspect of this broad-shouldered figure in the everyday clothes of a Texas cowman. Yet here was the ruler of an empire. His high-heeled boots of black leather were stitched in coloured thread, scuffed by hard wear, hand-made, had cost perhaps sixty dollars; tight brown canvas trousers tucked into the boot tops; brown shirt open at the throat; a canvas brush jacket; a Stetson, dust-stained, and rolled at the brim to make an exaggerated tricorn. Every garment he wore was suited to the work and the climate of his world; and everything from his lariat to his saddle, from his boots to his hat, had been copied from the Mexican horsemen whose land this Texas had been little more than a century ago.

Just below the leather belt with its hand-tooled design of the reata the hard lean body was beginning to show a suspicion of a bulge. Sun wind dust had etched Bick Benedict's face, tanned the skin to warm russet. A strangely contradictory face, benign and arrogant. Benevolent and ruthless. The smile was nervous rather than mirthful. His was a deceptive gentleness; soft-spoken, almost mild. The eyes were completely baffling; guileless, visionary; calculating, shrewd.

Up since five, he was late, he was weary, he was beset, he had nicked his right forefinger in a magic new weighing machine they were installing down at the main corral. He threw a lot of Texas into his greeting now.

"Vashti! And Pinky! Well! This is mighty nice!" He clasped Pinky's little hand of steel, he took Vashti's plump fingers in his hand that was as tough as rawhide. Vashti's colour, normally pink, now became enriched by a maroon overlay. She had blushed in this way, painfully, at sight or touch of him ever since the day, over twenty years ago, when he had surprised Nueces County and the whole of Texas by bringing this Leslie, this Virginia girl unknown to them all, to Reata Ranch as his wife.

"Nearly winded Pronto getting here. Anything wrong, Leslie?"

He poured out a cup of coffee, drank it black and hot with the eagerness of need. People were frequently annoyed by the fact that as they talked to him he appeared not to be listening. He listened to nothing that did not vitally interest him; and nothing held his interest that was not vitally connected with this vast kingdom over which he and his father and his grandfather had reigned for a hundred years. His was the detachment, the aloofness, the politely absent-minded isolation of royalty.

"The people at the Big House are late," Leslie now said. "The cars went to get them half an hour ago."

He tensed to a distant sound. "There they are now. I'll change and be back before they're out of the cars." He vanished into the shaded recesses of the house. The gaze of the two older women followed him. In Vashti's eyes were bafflement and adoration and poignant hurt; in Leslie's wisdom and tenderness and the steady glowing warmth of a wife who, after many years of marriage and disillusionment, is still deeply in love with her husband.

A covey of long sleek grey cars; talk; over-hearty laughter. Only two people occupied the passenger space of the roomy first car though each following car held six or seven.

A tall thin man in a black Homburg scrambled hastily down from the front seat which he had occupied with the Mexican driver and opened

the door of the lead car and the King and Queen of Sargovia stepped out. A thin somewhat horse-faced sad girl in a not very new French dress and a long double string of large genuine pearls which dangled drearily and looked dated because all the women were wearing two-strand chokers of cultured pearls that looked smarter and more genuine. The man was shorter than she with a long neck as though he had stretched it in an attempt to appear taller; and his Habsburg blood showed in his prognathous jaw which should have looked strong but didn't.

Leslie went forward to meet them as Vashti scrambled for the shoe at the side of her chair.

"I hope you slept, Sir. And you, Ma'am. Everyone was warned to be very quiet on pain of death, but you know . . . ranch noises are so . . . Sir, may I present Mrs. Mott Snyth. Mr. Mott Snyth . . . Ma'am, may I present . . ."

CHAPTER 3

"IT ISN'T FAR," Bick Benedict assured them. "Four hundred miles. We're early. We can cruise round. I'd like to show you something of the Pecos section of Reata—from the air, of course. And you could have a look at historic old Beaumont later. That's the site of old Spindletop, you know."

"Spindletop?" said Miss Lona Lane, the movie girl. "Is that a mountain or something? I don't like flying over mountains very much."

The Texans present looked very serious which meant that they were bursting inside with laughter. It was as though a tourist in Paris had asked if Notre Dame was a football team.

"Uh—no," Bick Benedict said, turning on all his charm which was considerable. Miss Lona Lane was extremely photogenic.

"Spindletop was the first big oil gusher in Texas. It dates back to 1901."

The Texans relaxed.

Bick Benedict addressed himself to the king.

"Perhaps tomorrow we can fly up to Deaf Smith County in the

Panhandle. There are some Herefords up there I'd like to show you."

"That would be interesting. What is the distance?"

"About eight hundred miles."

The ex-monarch smiled nervously, he fingered his neat necktie. "To tell you the truth, I am not as accustomed to this flying as you Texans. You see, my little country could be hidden in one corner of your Texas. At home I rarely flew. It was considered too great a risk. Of course, that was when kings were . . . Our pilots were always falling into the Ægean Sea. Or somewhere. Perhaps it is because we are not the natural mechanics that you here in the great industrial United States——"

His English was precise and correct as was his wife's, clearly the triumph of the Oxford-tutor and English-governess system over the mid-European consonant.

"That's right," said Congressman Bale Clinch. "Here every kid's got a car or anyway a motor-bike. And a tractor or a jeep is child's play. Flying comes natural, like walking, to these kids."

The group had been whisked to the ranch airfield where the vast winged ship stood awaiting them. They all climbed the metal steps, jauntily, into the hot shade of the plane's interior.

"It'll be cooler as soon as we get up," Bick Benedict called out. "We're pressurized." Seats upholstered in brilliant blue and yellow and rose and green, very modern and capacious. In the tail was a cosy section with banquettes upholstered in crimson leather and a circular table in the centre for cards or for dining.

And there at the door as they entered was a slim dark-haired young steward in a smart French-blue uniform and beside him stood the blonde young stewardess in her slick skirted version of the same, and in the inner distance an assistant steward busy with wraps and little jewel cases and magazines.

"Bourbon!" boomed a big male voice. It was Judge Whiteside in reply to a question from the steward with a tray and glasses.

The royal pair jumped perceptibly. The steward turned to them. "Bourbon? Scotch? Old-fashioned? Martini?"

"Oh, it's a—it's something to drink!" It was the first time the queen had spoken since leaving the house.

"Well, sure," said Bale Clinch, "bourbon whisky, what else would it be?"

"I have some relatives whose family name this is, in a way of speaking. May I know how the name of Bourbon came to be used for a whisky?" the girl asked shyly.

"Well, ma'am," the Congressman began to explain, "it's the best old whisky there is, and it's made of mash that's better than fifty per cent corn. It's called that because they say it was first made in Bourbon County, Kentucky. My opinion, it was originally made in Texas."

Fascinated, the king and queen watched the male Texans tossing down straight bourbon. Bent on pleasing though they were, they refused it themselves, knowing that this was no refreshment for a royal stomach, sedentary by habit and weak by inheritance. On the wagon, said the heavyweight ex-champion. Not before six p.m., said the cowboy movie star.

For Leslie Benedict there was about this vast and improbable vehicle and its motley company a dreamlike quality. Her sister Lady Karfrey was being studiedly rude to royalty, she had no time for the deposed or unsuccessful. They're behaving like refugees, Leslie thought. Worried and uncertain and insecure and over-anxious to please. Kings and queens deposed were once called exiles—splendid romantic exiles. Now they're only refugees, I suppose.

It was mid-afternoon as they came down at the Hermoso airport, the shabby old municipal airport. As they buckled their seat belts for the landing their faces were pressed against the windows, they beheld glittering beside the scrofulous old airport the splendid white and silver palace which Jett Rink had flung down on the prairie. Spanning the roof of the building was a gigantic silver sign that, treated with some magic chemical, shone day and night so that the words JETT RINK AIRPORT could be seen from the air and from the ground for miles across the flat plains from noon to midnight to noon.

The huge craft touched the runway as delicately, as sensitively as a moth on a window-pane. The clank of metal as straps were unbuckled. The Texans strolled to the door as casually as one would proceed from the house to the street. The visitors breathed a sigh of relief. They stood



ready to disembark, huddled at the door, king and cowboy and rancher and politician and actress and statesman and housewife. Royalty in the lead.

At the door, smiling but military in bearing, stood the slim young steward and the pretty stewardess. "Come back quick now!" the girl chirped.

"I beg your pardon!" said the king, startled.

"It's a—a phrase," Leslie explained. "It's the Texas way of saying good-bye."

Just before they descended the aluminium stairway Bick Benedict made a little speech, as host.

"Look, I'm going to brief you, kind of. Those of you who aren't Texans. This is the old airport, you know. The new one isn't open for traffic until after tonight. That's where the party's to be. I'm afraid there'll be photographers and so forth waiting out there. And reporters."

"This is going to be a stampede," Gabe Target predicted.

"No, now, Gabe. Everything'll be fine if you'll just trail me, you know I'm a good top hand, Gabe. There's a flock of cars waiting, we'll pile straight in and head for the hotel. And remember, everything's pylon. No one touches a pocket—except to pull a gun of course."

Even the outsiders knew this was a standard laugh. But, "Pylon?" inquired Joe Glotch.

"Means everything free," yelled Congressman Bale Clinch, "from Jett Rink's hotel and back again."

There were the photographers kneeling for close shots, standing on lorries for far shots. There were planes and planes and planes, overhead and underfoot. A Texas big-town commercial airfield. Squalling kids, cattlemen in big hats and high-heeled boots—the old-timers. The modern young business and professional men, hatless, their faces set and serious behind bone-rimmed spectacles, their brief cases under their arms as they descended the planes from Dallas and Lubbock and Austin and El Paso. Hatless housewives in jeans or gingham with an infant on one arm and a child by the hand flew a few hundred miles to do a bit of shopping and see the home folks. The Wonder Bird, the dazzling invention of the twentieth century, had become a common

carrier, as unremarkable here in Texas as the bus line of another day.

Through the withering blast of the white-hot sun again and then into the inferno of the waiting motor-cars that had been standing so long in the glare. The newspaper-men and -women crowded round the windows, they said lean forward a little will you king, as they tried for another picture.

"You all going to be at the Conky?" one of the reporters yelled after them as they moved off. Leslie, with the others about to step into one of the waiting cars, smiled over her shoulder at the cluster of reporters and cameramen. "Conky," she repeated after them with distaste. She caught a glimpse of the royal pair, artificial smiles still pasted, slightly askew, on their faces. Then their car picked up speed and was away like the lead car in a funeral cortège. The grimace of forced amiability faded from their weary features. With a gesture Leslie seemed to wipe the smile from her own countenance, she thought, I'm one of a family of rulers, too, by marriage. The Benedicts of Texas. I wonder how soon we're going to be deposed?

"Uh—Conqui?" said the ex-Presidente as the cortège drove off. "However is it spelled? Is that the name of a man like this Jettrink?"

"That's two names, you know," Leslie said. "His first name is Jett. His last name is Rink. Conky. Well, they just call it that, it's a sort of nickname for the big new hotel. The Conquistador. Jett Rink built that too."

"Mm! The Spanish is very popular here, I can see. And this Jett Rink whose name I hear so often. He is a great figure in the United States of America?"

"Say, that's a good one," said Mott Synth. Then, at a nudge from his wife, "Pardon me." A little cloud of ominous quiet settled down upon the occupants of the car.

Through this Leslie Benedict spoke coolly: "This Jett Rink about whom you hear so much—he's a spectacular figure here in Texas."

"They say he was weaned on locoweed when he was a baby," Vashti babbled. "He's always trying to do something bigger or costs more money than anybody else. They say this Hermoso airport's bigger than any in the whole United States. And this hotel we're going to, why,

ever since he saw the Shamrock in Houston he said he was going to put up a hotel bigger and fancier and costing more than even it did. And that's the way he always does. Ants," she concluded, smiling her cherubic smile at the gravely attentive South American diplomat, "in his pants."

Little Pinky Snyth, grinning impishly, addressed himself to the visitors. He spoke in the Texas patois, perhaps perversely, perhaps because instinct told him that this was the proper sauce with which to serve up a story about Jett Rink.

"Well, say, maybe this'll give you some notion of Jett."

Congressman Bale Clinch cleared his throat, obviously in warning.

"Pinky, you ain't aiming to tell about that little trouble with the ex-soldier, are you? I wouldn't if I was you, it's liable to give a wrong notion of Texas."

"No. No, this is nothing serious, this is about that fellow up at Dalhart," he addressed himself to the ambassador, and to Joe Glotch, impartially. "That's way up in Dallam County in the Panhandle. This fella, name of Mody—he had a little barbecue shack by the road up on Route 87. He got a knack of fixing barbecued ribs they say it had a different taste from anybody else's and nobody's wangled the receipt off of him, he won't give. So Jett Rink he hears about these ribs and one night when he's good and stinking he gets in his plane with a couple of other umbrys, he always travels with a bunch of bodyguards, they fly up to Dalhart it's as good as a thousand miles or nearly and the place is closed the fella's gone to bed. Jett and the others they rout him out, they make him fix them a mess of barbecued ribs and they eat it and Jett says it's smashin' and what has he got in the barbecue sauce makes it taste different. This Mody says it's his receipt, it's his own original mix and he don't give it out to nobody. Well, Jett gets hot the way he does, he started out just rawhiding but now he gets wild the way he does when he's by-passed. He hits the fella over the head with a beer bottle, the fella dies, Jett has to pay his widow ten fifteen thousand dollars besides all the other expenses and lawyers and fixers and the plane trip and all, why it must of cost Jett Rink better than twenty-five thousand dollars to eat that plate of barbecue. Funny thing about Jett. If he can get a

thing he don't want it. But if he wants it and can't get it, watch out."

"That's right," ruminated Congressman Bale Clinch. "Yes sir. You got to say this for Jett Rink. He goes after what he wants."

A heavy silence fell upon the occupants of the great rich car as it swept along the sun-drenched streets of Hermoso's outskirts.

"We will soon be there," Leslie said to the ambassador. "Just another minute or two. The Conquistador isn't in the heart of the city, you know. Like the other hotels. It's very lavish like a big resort hotel."

"Air-conditioned," shrilled Vashti, "from cellar to roof, every inch of it—except the help's quarters, of course. They say there's guests there never had their faces outdoors since Jett flung it open—or sealed it shut, you might put it."

"And the recipe for the barbecue," the South American persisted gently. "Did he get it then?"

Pinky looked doubtful. "Well, sir, I never rightly heard. The place was closed down or sold out. Jett he felt terrible about the whole thing when he sobered up. There was a daughter, girl about eighteen, she got a job in Jett's outfit somewheres. Did real well."

"She sure did!" said Vashti with more bite than her speech usually carried.

Silence again. The streets were broad boulevards now, the houses were larger, they became pretentious. Hermoso oil and cattle society had gone in for azaleas, the motor-cars flashed past masses of brilliant salmon-pink and white and orchid and now you could see the towers of the Conqueror, the Conquistador, rising so incongruously there in suburban Hermoso thirty stories up from the flat Texas plain. Towers, balconies, pent-houses, palm trees, swimming-pool. Flags and pennants swirled and flirted in the hot Gulf breeze—the single-starred flag of the Lone Star State, the Stars and Stripes above this, but grudgingly; and fluttering from every corner and entrance and tower the personal flag of Jett Rink, the emblem of his success and his arrogance and his power, with his ranch brand centred gold on royal blue as he had sketched it years ago in his own hand—years and years before he had owned so much as a maverick cow or a gallon of oil; the J and the R combined to make the brand JR.

CHAPTER 4

ROYAL BLUE and gold smote the eye, the air swam with it. The door-man's uniform, the porter, the swarm of bell-boys that sprang up like locusts. Royal-blue carpet in the vast lobby. Gold pillars. Masses of hot-house blue hydrangeas and yellow lilies. The distinguished guests were engulfed in a maelstrom of boots, spurs, ten-gallon hats, six-foot men; high shrill voices of women, soft drawling voices of sunburned men; deep-cushioned couches, and chairs hidden under their burden of lolling figures staring slack-jawed at the milling throng, their aching feet wide-flung on the thick-piled carpet. The Conquistador was a city in itself, self-contained, self-complacent, almost majestically vulgar. Downstairs and upstairs, inside and out, on awnings carpets couches chairs desks rugs; towels linen; metal cloth wood china glass, the brand JR was stamped etched embroidered embossed woven painted inlaid.

What with Bick Benedict's familiarity with such fiestas, and Leslie Benedict's clear orderly sense of situation, the members of their group had been safely disposed in their Conquistador quarters, each according to his importance as seen through the eyes of the Manager, the Assistant Manager, and the Room Clerk, guided perhaps for this very special occasion by the bloodshot orb of Jett Rink himself. Protean couches could magically transform single sitting-rooms into bedrooms. Good enough for an ex-Presidente, the hard-pressed Management instantly decided. Sitting-room and bedroom in a nice spot for the heavyweight ex-champion. Nice little suite for Cal Otter the Cowboy Movie Star, where the crowd could get at him for autographs and so on. Snappy little balcony job for Lona Lane where the photographers could catch her for outside shots. The Coronado pent-house suite for the Bick Benedicts and the Hernando de Soto apartment for the king and queen, ex or not, the Management said in solemn discussion, they were a bona fide king and queen, even if they had been cut out, you couldn't laugh that off and it would look good in publicity. This festive opening of Hermoso's airport, gift of the fabulous Jett Rink, had turned his hotel (mortgaged, as gossip said, for something like thirty million dollars) into a vast and

horrendous house party. There wasn't a room or a closet or a cupboard to be had by an outsider. From lobby to roof the structure was crammed with guests each of whom had a precious pasteboard, named and numbered, which would identify and place him at Jett Rink's gigantic airport banquet tonight.

Leslie and Bick were in their enormous bedroom. Blond wood, bleached like a Broadway chorus girl. Their feet seemed to flounder ankle-deep in chenille. "They ought to give you snowshoes for these carpets," Bick said. "Or skis. Liable to get in up to your neck and never get out."

Half an acre of dressing-table laden with perfumes, china, glass. A dining-room of bleached mahogany, but vaguely Oriental in defiance of Coronado. The dining-table could seat thirty. There was a metal kitchen complete and as virgin as the culinary unit in a utilities-company window. Overpowering lamps with tent-size shades. Three bedrooms. Terraces. A bathroom in pink tile, a bathroom in yellow tile, a bathroom in aquamarine, with brilliant varnished wallpaper depicting conquistadores in armour dallying with maidens of obscure origin among flora not now indigenous to Texas.

Leslie had taken off the blue shantung and was making a tour of the vast and absurd living-room, so cold in its metal and satin and brocade and glass and pale wood and air conditioning. She surveyed this splendour with an accustomed eye. It had been theirs on the occasion of the hotel's opening a year earlier. With one hand Leslie hugged her peignoir more tightly about her for warmth while with the other hand she patted cold cream on her face, walking slowly the length of the room and pausing now and then before some monstrous structure of porcelain or carved wood.

"There's no JR on the Meissen or the pictures," she called back to Bick. "What must Coronado think! Except for a few liquor spots on the carpet and cigarette burns on the wood everything has stood up wonderfully this past year. I hope Hernando de Soto has done as well for the king and queen."

"You were all right on the plane. You promised me you would be and you were." He stood in the doorway in shirt and pants and bedroom

slippers, a costume becoming only to males of twenty and those in the men's underwear advertisements. "I know you didn't want to come but we had to and you damn well know why. Even if millions are dross to you. I don't bother you with business affairs but you had to know that and now I'm telling you again. . . . And where's Luz I'd like to know! And Jordy and Juana. Why couldn't they come with us the way other people's kids would! No, Luz had to fly her own, and Jordan and Juana had to drive. And now where are they?"

She went to him, she had to stand on tiptoe, fall though she was.

"If you don't mind the cold cream I can stand the shaving soap." She kissed him not at all gingerly. "No soap there, at least."

"You hate the whole thing, don't you? As much as ever. That's why you talk like a—like a——"

"Like one of those women in the Marquand novels you don't read. Very quippy. Don't worry about the children. They'll be here for the dinner. Their behaviour is odd but their manners are beautiful."

"Like their mother, wouldn't you say?"

"That's right, amigo. We'd better dress. I had Eusebio pack your white dinner-clothes and black cummerbund and I've even ordered a deep red carnation for your buttonhole—probably the only red carnation in Texas. You'll be as smart as paint."

He glanced down at himself, he contracted his stomach muscles sharply. "Riding does it. Everybody else lolling about in cars all the time. Even the vaqueros ride herd in jeeps half the time."

"Just remember to tuck in like that when you wrap your lithe frame into your cummerbund or you'll never manage the first button."

THE GUESTS came in cars the size of hearses and these were not stuck in the common traffic. Each carried a magic card and whole streets and outlying roads were open only to them. The women had got their dresses in New York or at Neiman's in Dallas or Oppen-Schlink's in Houston. Their jewels were the blazing plaques and chains you see in a Fifth Avenue window outside which a special policeman with a bulge on his hip is stationed on eight-hour duty. Slim and even chic, there was still lacking in these women an almost indefinable quality that was

inherent in the women of the eastern and mid-western United States. Leslie Benedict thought she could define it. In the early days of her marriage she had tried to discuss it with her husband as she had been accustomed to talk with her father during her girlhood and young womanhood—freely and gaily and intelligently, lunge and riposte, very exhilarating, adult to adult.

"They lack confidence," she had said in the tones of one who has made a discovery after long search. "That's it. Unsure and sort of deferential. Like Oriental women."

"What do you think they should be? Masculine?"

"I was just speaking impersonally, darling. You know. Their voices even go up at the end of a declarative sentence instead of down. It's sort of touching, as though they weren't sure you'd like what they've said and were willing to withdraw it."

"Well, you know the old Texas saying. In Texas the cattle come first, then the men, then the horses, and last the women."

Now, as they drove into the vast airfield and stopped at the flood-lighted entrance, Leslie was thinking of these things without emotion, but almost clinically as she had learned she must if she would survive. Mindful of their two most distinguished guests in the crush and glare and clamour of the entrance they had somehow lost the South American. "It's all right," Bick said. "We'll pick him up inside. And we're all at the same table."

"Oh, Bick!" Leslie called through the roar and din. "Did you give him his card, I think it would have been better to give everyone a card just in case they were lost—oh, there he is in the doorway. Why—what——!"

The olive-skinned aquiline face, the slim and elegant figure in full evening dress, was easily distinguishable in the midst of the gigantic Texans in cream-coloured suits, in dun-coloured tropicals, in Texas boots and great cream Stetsons, worn in defiance of the negligible universe outside their private world. Even in the welter of waving arms, the shrill greetings, the booming laughter, the shoving and milling, it was plain that something was wrong.

"Hurry, Bick. What is it?"

The men behind the door ropes were giants in khaki, with guns on their slim hips. Bick Benedict heard one of them say, "Well, you sure look like a cholo to me, and no Mexicans allowed at this party, that's orders and besides none's invited, that's sure."

"Oh, no!" cried Bick Benedict, and battered his way to reach the giant doorman. He called to him as he came. "Hi, Tod! Tod! Hold that, will you! Hold on there!" And the other man's head turning towards him, his dark eyes stony with outrage. Bick reached them, he put a hand on the faultlessly tailored sleeve, the other on Tod's steely wrist. "Look, Tod, this gentleman is one of the honoured guests this evening, he's going to be the new ambassador from Nueva Bandera, down in South America. He's come all the way from Washington to——" His voice was low, insistent.

Tod's sunburned face broke into a grin that rippled from the lips to the eyes, he spoke in the soft drawl of his native region. "Well, I'm a hollow horn! I sure didn't go for to hurt your feelings. I made a lot of mistakes in my day but this does take the rag off the bush." He held out his great hand. "Glad to make your acquaintance. Sure sorry, Bick. Pass right along, gentlemen. Hi there, Miz Benedict, you're looking mighty purty."

There isn't anything to do, Leslie said to herself as she slipped her hand through the guest's arm, there isn't anything to do but ignore the whole thing unless he speaks of it.

She chatted gaily. "It's going to be a shambles, so crowded. We don't have to stay late after the dinner if you want to leave—you and the others. It's just one of those things—everybody's supposed to show up—you know—like a Washington reception when you can't get near the buffet. You've probably never before in your life seen Stetsons worn with black dinner jackets or women in Mainbocher evening gowns escorted by men in shirt sleeves and boots."

Dinner, presaged by a jungle of tables and tables and tables, was to be served in the great domed main concourse. A bedlam, designated on the engraved invitations as a reception, was in progress in great sections and halls and rooms that next week would be restaurants, lunch-rooms, baggage-rooms, shops, offices. Every ticket and travel counter tonight

was a bar. Travel signs were up, neat placards bearing the names of half a dozen airlines. And off the main hall were arrowed signs that said LADIES and others that said COLOURED WOMEN. Orchids and great palms and tubs of blossoming trees. Banners, pennants, blinding lights.

The men—the great mahogany-faced men bred on beef—who somehow had taken on physical dimensions in proportion to the vast empire they had conquered—stood close together, shoulder to shoulder, as male as bulls; massive of shoulder, slim of flank, powerful, quiet and purposeful as diesel engines. On the opposite side of the room, huddled too, but restless, electric, yearning, stood the women in their satins and chiffons and jewels. The men talked together quietly, their voices low and almost musical in tone. The women were as shrill as peacocks, they spread their hand-made flounces and ruffles; white arms waved and beckoned.

The ambassador looked about him with an impassive face. "It is interesting," he said, "that the people of this country of Texas——"

"Country!"

"It is like a country apart. It is different from any other North American state I have seen and I have travelled very widely here in the United States. It is curious that the citizens of Texas have adopted so many of the ways and customs of the people they despise."

"How do you mean?" Leslie asked as though politely interested. She knew.

"In Latin countries—in Mexico and in Spain and Brazil and other South American countries including my own Nueva Bandera—you will often find the men gathered separately from the women, they are talking politics and business and war and national affairs in which the women are assumed not to be interested."

"Or informed?"

Leslie, the outspoken, looked at him, she felt admiration and almost affection for this man who had met insult with such dignity. "Here in Texas we are very modern in matters of machinery and agriculture and certain ways of living. Very high buildings on very broad prairies. But very little high thinking or broad view-point. But they're the most hospitable people and they're really wonderful in a crisis. In the last war—

and the First World War, too—the Texans were the most patriotic and courageous——”

“Yes. I know. But war is, as you say, a crisis—an excrescence, a cancer on the body of civilization. It is what a people do and think in the time of health and peace that is most important.” He was very quiet and collected and somehow aloof in the midst of the turmoil all about them. Like Jordy’s wife, Juana, she thought suddenly. Remote, like Juana. He was speaking again, through the uproar. “But you are not a Texan?”

“No. But my husband is, of course, and all his people since the beginning of—Oh, it must be dinner. They’re moving towards the other room. Our party is all at the same table, it’s Number One on the dais with our host, Jett Rink.”

“Ah yes, the host who spends twenty-five thousand dollars for a dish of barbecue.” He glanced about at the incredible scene. “I can well believe it now.”

“There’s Jordan—there’s my husband—with the others. Now, if only we can stay together.” She raised her voice to reach her husband struggling towards them. “Luz? Jordy?”

His shoulders were making a path for the royal pair behind him. “Haven’t seen them,” he shouted. “Catch on like a conga line and we’ll make it.”

Breathless, dishevelled, they found themselves half an hour later seated on a platform at an orchid-covered table like a huge catafalque. From the hundreds of tables below a foam of faces stared up at them. Flash-lights seared the air. Bands blared. The loudspeakers created pandemonium.

“And when,” said the king seated beside Leslie, “does our host appear?”

With awful suddenness the loudspeaker system went off and the comparative silence stunned one. From the dais where he sat with the guests of honour boomed the unctuous voice of Congressman Bale Clinch in tones which, under stress of the amplifiers, had been meant for the confidential ear of his dinner neighbour alone. In the sudden silence they now rang out with all the strength and authority with which, in

Congress, he frequently addressed his compatriots on the subject of Texas oil rights in general and Jett Rink's claims in particular.

"That wildcattin' Jett Rink is drunk again or I'll eat a live rattlesnake. They're soberin' him up in there——" He stopped aghast as a thousand faces turned towards him like balloons in a breeze.

Big though his voice was it had carried only through a fraction of the great concourse. But the repetition from mouth to mouth had taken only a few seconds. A roar, a Niagara of laughter, shook the room.

In the midst of this Luz Benedict appeared suddenly at the main table, she had not made her way through the main room, she seemed to have materialized out of the air. She was wearing a white chiffon gown, not quite fresh; no jewellery, her fair hair still tied back in the absurd horse's tail coiffure, though now a little spray of tiny fresh white orchids replaced the black ribbon that had held it.

She leaned over her father's chair as casually as though she were in the dining-room at the ranch. "Who told the joke?" she inquired casually. "I could use a laugh."

Bick Benedict turned his head slightly, he bit the words out of the corner of his mouth. "Where've you been? And Jordan?"

"Listen. Jordy's looking for Jett, he says he's going to beat him up, he——"

Bick Benedict jerked round in his chair to face his daughter. "You're crazy! Where is he?"

From the far far end of the room young Jordan Benedict strode down through the jungle of tables close-packed as mesquite on the plains. He was alone. Straight towards the table marked Number One—the table on the dais.

Bick Benedict muttered an apology to the right to the left, quickly he pushed back his chair and stood facing Luz. He grasped her wrist. "What's the matter with him? What happened?" He shook her arm a little as though to hurry her into speech.

"He smashed up the beauty parlour at the hotel, he threw chairs into the mirrors and shot out the lights like an old Western movie——"

"Beauty parlour! What the hell do you m——"

"Oh, you know—where we have our hair done and everything. Don't

be—anyway, he wrecked it and now he's looking for Jett he says he's going to smash his face he says it's Jett's hotel and his orders——”

“Why! Why! Why! Quick!”

“Juana went down to keep an appointment to have her nails done. She'd telephoned, and given her name of course. When she got down there the girl at the desk looked at her and said they didn't take Mexicans, she came upstairs and Jordy went——” She stopped abruptly. “There comes Jett. Look. He's been drinking.”

With a sudden blare that jolted the ear-drums the loudspeaker went on. From the two bands there was a ruffle of the drums. Jett Rink came through the door marked Office. Private. White dinner-clothes, a tight little boutonniere of blue-bonnets on his lapel. The curiously square face, thin-lipped, ruthless, the head set too low on the neck that in turn was too massive for the small-boned body. He walked, not as a man who has authority and power but as a man does who boasts of these. On his right walked a man, on his left walked a man, the two looked oddly alike in an indefinable way, as though the resemblance came from some quality within them rather than from any facial kinship. Their clothes seemed too tight as though they covered muscles permanently flexed and their faces were impassive, the cold hard eyes regnant as searchlights.

“Hi, Jett!” bawled the cowboy movie star.

“Which is he?” the king inquired, not very astutely.

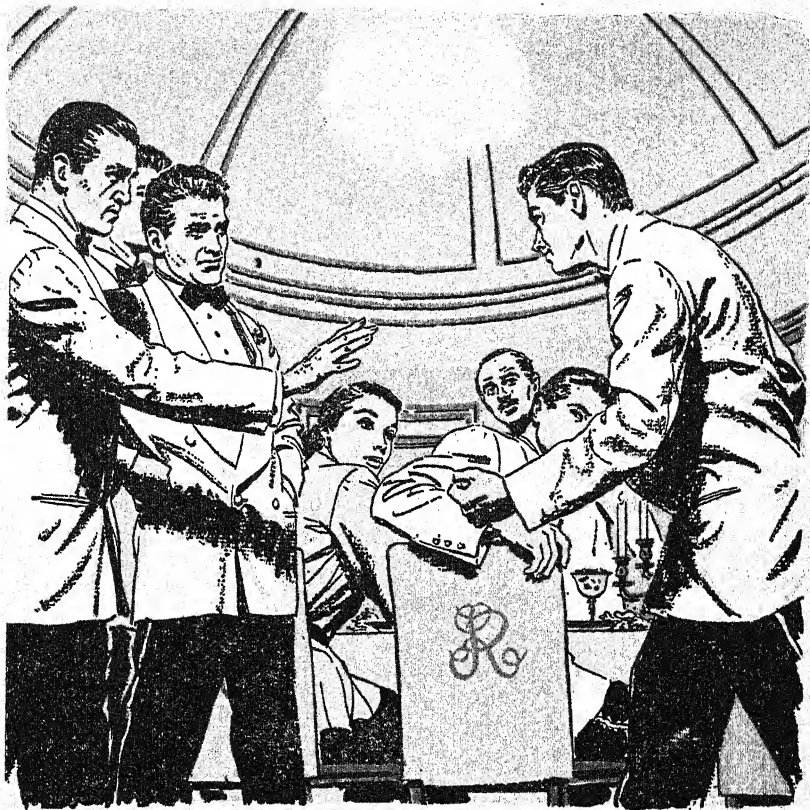
Congressman Bale Clinch answered somewhat impatiently.

“The middle one, of course. Those other two are strong-arms.”

Jordy Benedict reached the dais, he leaped upon it nimbly, crept beneath the table opposite his father's empty chair like a boy playing hide-and-seek, and bobbed up to face Jett Rink. At the tables below the dais the diners had got to their feet leaving the slabs of red roast to congeal on their plates.

Jordy Benedict called no names. He looked absurdly young and slim as he faced the three burly figures.

“Stand away,” he said quietly, “and fight.” His arm came back and up like a piston. A spurt of crimson from Jett Rink's nose made a bizarre red white and blue of his costume. A dozen hands pinned Jordy's arms, the flint-faced men held Jett Rink, the two glaring antagonists, pinioned



thus, strained towards each other like caged and maddened animals.

Jett Rink jumped then, swinging hammock-like between the two guards whose arms held his. His feet, with all his powerful bulk behind them, struck Jordy low with practised vicious aim so that the grunt as the boy fell could be heard by the guests of honour on the dais even above the blare of the band.

Quick though Bick was, Leslie was there before him, kneeling on the floor beside her son. For the moment he was mercifully unconscious. The first exquisite agony of this blow had distorted the boy's face, his

body was twisted with it. His eyes were closed. Bick, kneeling, made as though to rise now. His eyes were terrible as he looked at the panting Jett Rink. But Leslie reached across the boy's crumpled form, she gripped Bick's arm so that her fingers bit into his muscles. Quietly, as though continuing a conversation, she said, "You see. It's caught up with you, it's caught up with us. It always does."

But now the boy stirred and groaned and his eyes opened and his face was a mask of hideous pain as he looked up into the two stricken faces bent over him. The physician in him rose valiantly to meet the moment, the distorted lips spoke to reassure them.

"Morphine . . . pain . . . not serious . . . morphine . . ."

CHAPTER 5

THOUGH the three Lynnton girls were always spoken of as the Beautiful Lynnton Sisters of Virginia they weren't really beautiful. For that matter, they weren't Virginians, having been born in Ohio. But undeniably there was about these three young women an aura, a glow, a dash that served as handily as beauty and sometimes handier. These exhilarating qualities wore well, too, for they lasted the girls their lifetime, which beauty frequently fails to do.

Leigh, the eldest—the one who married Sir Alfred Karfrey and went to England to live—was the least lovely of the three Lynnton Lovelies as they were sometimes fatuously called. She had the long aquiline face of her mother—horse-faced, her feminine detractors said—and she was further handicapped for dalliance by a mordant tongue that should have scared the wits out of the young male Virginians who came courting with Southern sweet talk. People said that with her scarifying wit she had actually whip-lashed the timorous Karfrey into marrying her.

Leslie the second sister was, as the term went, a blue-stocking. She was for ever reading books, but not the sort of books which other Southern young women consumed like bonbons as they lay in the well-worn hammock under the trees. Leslie Lynnton had opinions of her own, she conversed and even argued with her distinguished father and his friends on matters political, sociological, medical and literary just as if

she were a man. Though her eyes were large, dark, and warmly lustrous there was a slight cast in the left one which gave her, at times, a sort of stricken look. Oddly enough, men found this attractive, perhaps because it imparted a momentarily helpless and appealing aspect.

The third girl, Lacey, was seven years younger than her second sister and represented Mrs. Lynnton's last try for a son. Lacey turned out a tomboy and small wonder. As each of the three had been intended by their parents to be males only masculine names had been provided for them before birth.

You were always seeing photographs of the three in airy organdies and sashes posed with arms about one another's waists in front of white-columned porticoes with a well-bred hunting dog or two crouched in the foreground. But Race Lynnton—Doctor Horace Lynnton in all the encyclopædias and *Who's Whos* and medical journals—had really brought them up with a free hand and an open mind. Though the girls moved with grace and distinction they were generally considered too thin. Theirs were long clever-looking hands rather than little dimpled ones; theirs a spirited manner; little money and small prospect of more, being daughters of a very dedicated surgeon-physician-scientist.

Equipped thus rather meagrely for matrimony, one would justifiably have thought the three Lynnton sisters faced for spinsterhood. On the contrary, the big shabby Virginia house was clogged with yearning swains. Young Washington career men; slightly balding European sub-diplomats and embassy secretaries; Virginia and Maryland squires of the huntin' ridin' and slightly run-down set; with a sprinkling of New York lawyers and Wall Street men and even an occasional Mid-western businessman. Doctors who came ostensibly to confer with Horace Lynnton ended up in the vast hospitable kitchen (for the Lynntons were famous cooks in defiance of a day and place in which cooking was considered menial). Beaux haunted the verandas the parlours the stables. They swarmed all over the place—to the dismay of neighbouring beauties—much as bees will sometimes desert the stately cool rose for a field of heady wild red clover.

Though there was only a physician's income behind it, profusion was characteristic of the Lynnton ménage. Horses in the weathered stables;

the most delicate and savoury of American cooking in the kitchen. There were succulent soft-shell crabs from Maryland, smoked Virginia hams, Ohio maple sugar and pancakes, little plump white chickens, button-size hot biscuits with golden pools of butter between their brown cheeks. Profusion not only of food but of gaiety and laughter; of good talk at dinner and after; of guests, of servants, of books, of courtesy, of horses and dogs and crystal and silver. Sweet-scented flowers in the rambling garden, deep-cushioned shabby handsome chairs, vast beds and capacious fire-places, sherry on the sideboard, leisure in the air, and wit to spice the whole of this.

Bick Benedict was no fool, and he hadn't been twenty minutes in the place before he realized that this was a run-down old Southern place in need of about fifty thousand dollars in repairs. Not that he was there as anything but a guest, and then only a transitory one. In Washington on business he had come down to the Lynnton place in Virginia to look at a horse and to buy it if possible.

By the purest of accidents Doctor Horace Lynnton had found himself owner of a long-legged rangy filly who had turned out to be a gold mine. Doctor Lynnton had good-naturedly accepted the unwanted animal offered in part payment of a bill already absurdly small.

"She's an accident," the owner had confessed. "And I won't say she's any good except for one of your girls to ride. She's one of Wind Wings's."

"But I can't accept her," Doctor Lynnton had in the beginning protested. "You say her sire was Wind Wings?"

"Yes, but the dam was a stray plug that we kept for my little Betsy to jog about on. She got into the paddock by mistake, and the damage was done. Not that it matters, except that I want you to know that on her mother's side she hasn't a drop of good blood in her that I know of. She'll never run."

"Prince and peasant girl," said Horace Lynnton. "A combination that has been known to produce amazing results. Sire for speed, they say. Dam for stamina." They called her My Mistake but in spite of this by the time she was three years old it began to appear that she would soon romp away with everything from New York to Mexico.

Bick Benedict of Texas had sought out Horace Lynnton in Washington not as the famous man of science but as the owner of My Mistake.

"Is she for sale?" he had asked.

"I suppose so. I don't go in for racing. She was meant for my youngest daughter—to ride round the country roads. Turned out to be a lightning bolt."

"Could I see her?"

"Drive out with me this afternoon, if you care to, stay for dinner and overnight."

"Thanks, I'll be glad to drive out but I can't stay. I've got business engagements here in Washington——"

But he never left—or practically never—until he and Leslie were off for their honeymoon and Texas.

In the first twenty-four hours of his stay at the Lynntons' Jordan Benedict experienced a series of shocks which left him dazed but strangely exhilarated, too. The first shock to his South-west sensibilities came when Doctor Lynnton introduced the young Negro who drove them down to Virginia. The little ceremony was as casual (but also as formal) as though he were introducing any two friends or acquaintances.

"Benedict, this is Jefferson Swazey who'll drive us down. Jeff, this is Mr. Jordan Benedict from Texas."

Well I'll be damned, thought Jordan Benedict. On the way down the two men talked of this and that—of the freakish little filly; of the dead Harding, that pitiful and scandal-ridden figure; of Coolidge, the new President of the United States, the rigid and vinegary Vermonter.

Arrived, "Jeff will show us the filly," Horace Lynnton said, "or perhaps one of the girls will, though they don't ride her nowadays. She's in training, very hoity-toity and has ideas about who's in the saddle."

Jordan Benedict's eye, trained to estimate millions of acres and dozens of dwellings as a single unit, made brief work of the wistaria and honeysuckle. They did not hide from his expert gaze the sagging columns or disguise the fact that the outbuildings were in urgent need of repair. But then the family, as he met them one by one, made no effort at disguise, either.

It was almost dusk as they arrived. The two men entered the house.

A wide and beautifully proportioned hall ran from front to back with great arched doorways opening off it. Shabby rugs on a caramel floor. Riding-crops, tennis racquets; books and papers and magazines on the overflowing hall table; a friendly lean and lazy dog; a delicious scent of something baking or broiling or both. They peered into the big living-room. Here was a feminine world, all crystal and flowers and faded yellow satin curtains.

Doctor Lynnton shook his head. "The girls are somewhere about, but they're probably busy. Perhaps you'd like to wash up."

"I'd like to have a look at the filly while it's still light."

"Yes—the horse," Doctor Lynnton agreed somewhat vaguely. From a nearby room there came the sound of voices. He raised his voice to a shout. "Leslie!" Then, still more loudly, "Leslie!"

Bick Benedict turned expecting to see a son, perhaps, or a manservant answering to this name. There emerged from the library two figures, a man and a woman. The woman was wearing riding-clothes, he was startled to see that it was a side-saddle habit complete with glistening black boots, crop, white-starched stock. He had seen nothing like this for years—certainly not in Texas.

"Leslie, this is Jordan Benedict, here from Texas. My daughter Leslie."

The young man with her was in riding-clothes and not only riding-clothes but actually a pink coat of the hunting variety. Well I'm damned, Jordan Benedict said to himself for the second time in an hour. Then his ear was caught by the girl's voice, which was lovely, warm and vibrant.

"Texas! How interesting! Father, you know Nicky Rorik. Mr. Benedict, this is Count Nicholas Rorik, Mr. Jordan Benedict."

Doctor Lynnton moved towards the back doorway. "We're on our way to the paddock. Mr. Benedict's come to look at My Mistake."

"I'm coming along," said Leslie, "to tell you all her bad points. I don't want anyone to buy her."

"Dear daughter, kindly remember that Mr. Benedict is a Texan and your father is a country doctor. You two go on down to the stable. I'll join you directly, Jordan."

Rorik, Benedict was saying in his mind. Rorik. Now let's see. He comes from one of those kicked-about kingdoms or a midget principality or something, it's one of those musical-comedy places.

Then the slim dark young man said something about seeing everyone at dinner, and vanished with a bow. Weeks later Jordan Benedict dredged the young man up from the depths of his memory and put to his wife Leslie the questions which even now were stirring in his thoughts.

"That first day I met you, Leslie, when I came into the house with your father. You were tucked away in the library with that Rorik guy. What kind of hanky-panky was going on, anyway? Quiet as mice until your father called you."

"Oh, that. Well, I never quite knew myself. It was a serious proposal of a sort, but it had a morganatic tinge. When his uncle dies he'll become ruler or Grand Duke or whatever it's called. I've lost track."

Now, on their way to the paddock, he waited for her to speak. In Texas the women talked a lot, they chattered on and on about little inconsequential things calculated to please but not strain the masculine mind. Leslie Lynnton did not start the conversation. She strolled composedly and quietly beside him in her absurdly chic riding-clothes. All about them were the ancient trees, the scent of flowers whose perfume yielded itself to the cool evening air. The orchard was cloudy with blossoms.

"How green it is!" he said inadequately.

"Isn't it green in Texas?"

The girl must be a fool. "Don't you know about Texas?"

"No. Except that it's big. And the men wear hats like yours."

"Yes, I suppose this does look funny to you. But then that rigging you're wearing looks funny to me." For some reason he wanted to jar her composure. "And your friend's red coat."

She laughed and paused a moment in her walk and looked directly at him for the first time. "They're called pink, not red. Don't ask me why. And you're right about these riding-clothes of mine. They're ridiculous. I never wear them, really. Just today. It's a special day down here. Once a year they do a lot of rather silly stuff that was Virginia a

century or two ago. You know—scarlet coats and floating veils and yoicks. Tonight's the Hunt Ball—not at our house, thank heaven!—and you're invited."

"I'd look good at a Hunt Ball in these clothes."

"Oh well. We're having dinner here—just the family and two or three others. Do stay for that."

He muttered something about an engagement in Washington, to which she said politely, well, another time perhaps. And there they were at the stables and My Mistake was being paced in the paddock by a young Negro boy. Bick saw instantly that the satin-coated sorrel had the proper conformation; long of leg, neat of hoof, long muscular neck, deep chest.

"Well, there she is," said Doctor Lynnton, coming up behind them.

Horses had been a vital part of Jordan Benedict's life since birth. "And way before," he sometimes said. "They tell me that when I was born my mother slid off her horse and into bed at practically the same moment."

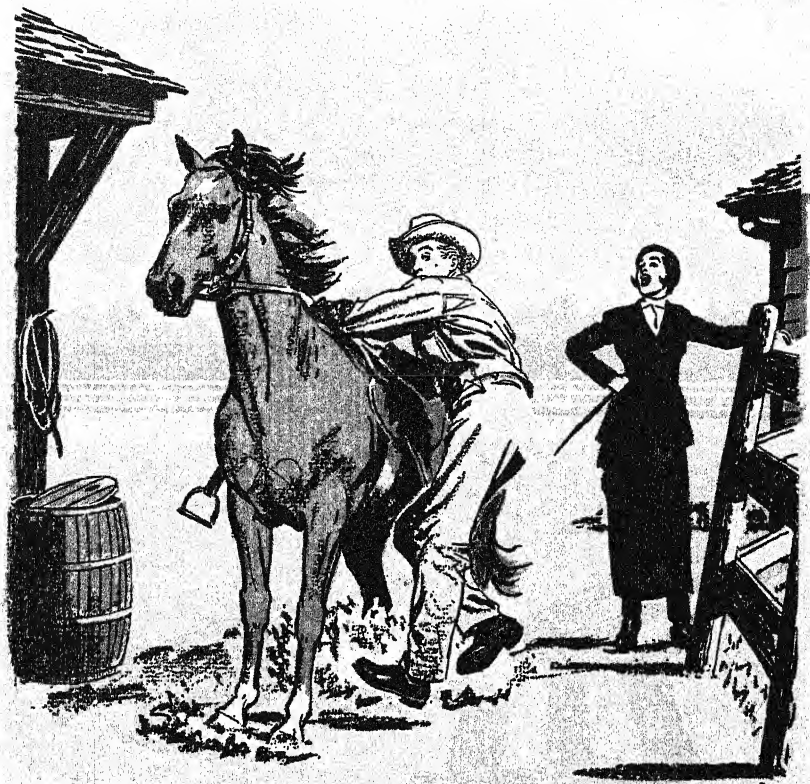
He turned now to Doctor Lynnton. "I'd like to try her out if you've no objection."

"Of course. How would you like to try her on the track? We've rigged up a little half-mile track there just beyond."

"How about your clothes?" Leslie called to him as he mounted.

He flung up his arm. "My grandmother could rope a steer in hoop skirts."

Perhaps it was the upflung arm that startled My Mistake. Jordan had ridden a thousand quarter-horses, bucking ponies, racing horses. This filly was a live electric wire carrying a thousand volts. She was out of the gate and on the track like a lightning flash. Accustomed all his life to the high-pommelled Western saddle, he sat the Eastern saddle well enough but his style was a revelation to Eastern eyes. Jordan's arms were akimbo, he held the reins high, his loose-jointed seat in the saddle irked the little filly, she jerked her head round to glare at him with rolling resentful eyeballs, she skittered sideways. She gave him a nasty five minutes. Damned girl, watching. He knew he must master the filly, he did master her, he took her twice round, drew up before his startled audience and dismounted before the animal had come to a stop.



Leslie Lynnton was laughing like a child, peal on peal of helpless spontaneous laughter.

"Now Leslie," her father said chidingly, "don't you tease Mr. Benedict. That's the way they ride in Texas. Informal, their riding."

Leslie drew a deep breath and choked a little. "That wasn't riding. That was scuffling with a horse."

He was deeply offended, it was almost as if a man had impugned his honour. Instantly she sensed this, she went to him she spoke so that the grinning stable-boys could hear. "I'm sorry. Forgive me. I'm ignorant

about your part of the country. Our way of riding seems queer to you, too. You'd laugh at me if you saw me in this habit all bunched up on the side of a horse."

He was furious. He said nothing. There was a little frown between his eyes and his eyes were steel.

"You must have a wife or a mother or a—or someone who has spoiled you terribly," Leslie said. "You take teasing so hard."

"My sister," he found himself saying to his own intense astonishment. "I'm not married. I live with my sister."

"Oh well, that accounts for it. Why aren't you married, Jordan?"

"Now Leslie!" Doctor Lynnton remonstrated.

He ignored this. "It seems strange to hear you call me Jordan." He pronounced it with a *u*, Jurden, Texas fashion. "Almost no one does. There's always been a Jordan in the family, but everyone calls me Bick." I'm talking too much, he told himself.

"Bick Benedict," Leslie tried the sound of it. "No, I like your own name. Jordan Benedict. Why do they call you Bick?"

He began to feel really foolish. "Oh, when I was a little kid I suppose I couldn't say Benedict, the nearest I could manage was Bick, and it stuck as a nickname." I'm talking too much, he told himself. What the hell does she care whether there's always been a Jordan and they call me Bick.

"Jordan," she said stubbornly. "You're staying to dinner. And the night. You can drive back to Washington tomorrow morning with Papa, he gets up at a ghastly hour and starts poking at people's insides before the world is awake."

"I came here to buy a horse," Bick announced rudely. "I won't go to any Hunt Ball."

Walking between the two men Leslie linked an arm into her father's arm, into Bick's. "I'll get up early and have breakfast with you two. There's Mama. We're late I suppose."

On the veranda steps stood Mrs. Lynnton and beside her a girl of sixteen or seventeen in men's trousers—at least that was what Bick Benedict called them. He was shocked. Even the professional rodeo girls wore full divided skirts in Texas.

"Mama, Mr. Jordan Benedict from Texas. . . . Lacey—my sister Lacey."

Mrs. Lynnton had made instant appraisal of this tall broad-shouldered visitor in the ten-gallon hat and dismissed him as negligible.

"Are you the man who wants to buy My Mistake?" Lacey asked bluntly.

Mrs. Lynnton acknowledged his presence for the first time. "I hope so, before Lacey here kills herself riding her."

"No, Mr. Benedict's not buying her," Leslie said, without reason.

"Oh yes, ma'am, I am," Bick said with a great deal of drawl as always when angry. Too many damned bossy women round here, he thought.

Doctor Lynnton waved a placating hand. "Let's not decide anything now. We'll have a drink and then we'll all clean up and see you downstairs at about eight, Jordan. Uh—Bick. Is that better?"

Stuck, he thought as he entered his room, but then instantly there came over him a sensation very strange—a mingling of peace and exhilaration. A large square high-ceilinged room, cool, quiet. Chintz curtains, flowers in a vase, a fire in the fire-place, a bathroom to himself, shaving things and sweet-smelling stuff in bottles in the bathroom, and big thick soft towels. Nothing like this at Reata in spite of the millions of acres and dozens of rooms and scores of servants and "hands."

Later in the evening when he mentioned the comfort of his room, Leslie said flippantly, "Yes, who cares about necessities, it's the luxuries that count. What if the dish-pan does leak!"

When he came downstairs he found no one there but Mrs. Lynnton in rustling silk doing something to chair cushions. She greeted him politely, she looked at him fleetingly. Not only did she mentally dismiss him as an eligible or even a possible suitor for her daughter—she regarded him as a male nobody with whom she could relax cosily without pretence.

"You're from Nebraska, Mr. Beckwith?"

"Texas, ma'am. Uh—Benedict."

"Texas, really!" As though he had said Timbuktu.

Old harpy. "You're from Ohio your daughter tells me."

"Well, we did live there at one time. But I'm a Virginian, my ancestors helped to settle Virginia."

"I've read about them," he said, too dryly. "A very interesting—uh—type, some of them."

She looked at him sharply but his blue eyes seemed guileless, his smile winning. "My daughter Leslie makes fun of me, and so does the Doctor and even Lacey, for that matter, because I am proud of my ancestry. Leslie's the worst. Daughters are a real problem, Mr.—uh. Of course Leigh wasn't. She's Lady Karfrey, you know."

"No, I didn't know."

"My, yes! She married Sir Alfred Karfrey, they live in England of course, he's a member of Parliament. Leslie could have married—well, anybody you might say. Goodness knows she's no beauty, skinny as a hunting-dog, and a slight cast in her left eye at times perhaps you've noticed, well, you'd think it would put men off her but they're bees round a honey-pot. And she has her nose in a book all day long and talks to the servants as if they were her equal—so does the Doctor for that matter—and she argues about what she calls democracy and human rights and stuff like that, I declare I should think the men would run the other way at mention of her name——"

"I think she's fascinating," Bick Benedict heard himself saying, to his own astonishment. It was a word he had never used—certainly never in connection with a woman.

He was cursing himself for having stayed when suddenly, like a badly directed stage scene, there were voices on the stairs, in the hall, on the veranda, there were a dozen people in the room and introductions were being performed and trays were being passed. Sherry! I'll bet that's the old girl's doings.

And there was Leslie, late but leisurely.

He looked at Leslie, he was startled by the rush of protective loyalty he felt towards her. She was wearing the disfiguring evening dress that was in vogue—the absurdly short skirt and loose hip-length waistline that so foreshortened the figure. Long slim legs, lovely shoulders, and now that she had taken off the white piqué stock and the rest of those stuffy riding-clothes he saw how exquisitely her head was set on her throat and how, in some mysterious way, she was really a beauty in disguise.

CHAPTER 6

At the table, opposite him—beyond all those lighted candles and the flowers—were Leslie and that Rorik fellow still in the red coat. Only it looked dressier now and his hair very black above the red. Bick disliked him for no reason. The food was very good. Wonderful, really. Run-down place, though. How could they afford it? Three daughters. Lady Karfrey, eh? Nuts to that!

Someone at the other end of the table must have asked Nicholas Rorik a question, for now he raised his voice to carry down the line of dinner guests, and smiled deprecatingly and shrugged his shoulders as he replied in his very good Oxford English. "It isn't a large country as you know, it is a principality, my country. Our little kingdom, as you call it, is only"—he cast up his eyes ceilingward to juggle the figures into American terms—"it would be in your miles less than eight hundred square miles. Very small, as you consider size in this country."

"My goodness," said his questioner at the other end of the table, laughing a little and then turning to look at Jordan Benedict, "Texas is bigger than that, isn't it, Mr. Benedict?"

"Texas!" said Doctor Lynnton. "Why, Mr. Benedict's ranch is bigger than that. Sorry, Nicky. No offence."

"I've always heard these tall tales from Texas," said one of the men on the other side of the table, "and now I'd like to have it straight from the hor—straight from headquarters, Mr. Benedict. Just how many acres have you got, or miles or whatever it is you folks reckon in? It's the biggest ranch in Texas, isn't it?"

Jordan Benedict could never accustom himself to the habit these Yankees had of asking a man how much land he had. Why, dammit, it was like asking a man how much money he had!

"No," he said quietly, "it isn't the largest. It is one of the large ranches but there are others as large. One or two larger, up in the Panhandle and down in the brush country."

He felt that Leslie Lynnton was looking at him and he sensed that

she understood his resentment though he didn't know how or why. That girl isn't only clever, he thought. She understands everything, that's why her eyes are so warm and lovely.

"Yes," the fellow was saying persistently. "Yes, but how many acres, actually? I'd like to hear those figures really rolling out and know that they're authentic. I could never bring myself to believe them. A million? Is that right? A million acres?"

Jordan Benedict felt his face reddening. Still, a straight question like that, aimed at a man's head. You had to answer it or insult a man at your host's table. He heard himself saying, "Something over two million acres. Two million and a half, to be exact."

Mrs. Lynnton's head had been slightly turned away from the table to speak over her shoulder to a servant. She turned now to look at Jordan Benedict. It was a stunned look, the look of one who has heard but who rejects the words as incredible. Her mouth was open before she began to speak.

"How many acres did you say, Mr. Benedict?"

"He said two and a half million acres, Mama," Leslie said with exquisite distinctness. "And you should see the greedy look on your face."

But Mrs. Lynnton was not one to be diverted from her quarry, once she had the scent.

"Are there," she persisted, "any cities on your land?"

Choking a little, "Why, yes ma'am, there are a few."

"Do you own those, too?"

The company could no longer be contained. A roar went up. Bick Benedict's reply, "Not exactly own, no ma'am," was lost in the waves of laughter.

At ten o'clock the dinner guests departed, bound for the Hunt Ball. Jordan Benedict politely declined to go, pleading no proper clothes and a very early Washington appointment. At ten-thirty Doctor Lynnton was in his own bedroom after half an hour's chat and a nightcap with his guest.

At a quarter to eleven Leslie Lynnton pleaded a crashing headache together with various other racking complications and left the Hunt Ball

flat, returning to her home under the somewhat dazed escort of a bewildered young man who had long been a willing but unrewarded victim. She went straight to the library but seemed disappointed in what she failed to find there. But she made three silent trips between the library and her bedroom, her arms loaded each time with books of assorted sizes. These she plumped down on her bed and it was surrounded by these tomes that her sister Lacey in the room next door came upon her in a spirit of investigation, having seen her light and heard her moving about.

Lacey poked her head in at the door. "I thought it was burglars or a lover," she said.

Leslie glanced up from the book she was reading. "Well, it would have been nice to see you in either case. And where do you learn such talk!"

"What are you home for!"

"To read. About Texas."

"You mean you came home from the Hunt Ball just to have a read! About Texas!"

"Go along to bed," Leslie said. "There's a good child."

Lacey gave her a hard look.

"Aha!" she said. "Likewise oho! Texas, huh? Oh, Leslie, are you in love with him?"

"Perhaps. Yes, I think so. He says Texas is different from any other state in the whole United States. He calls it 'my country' when he means Texas. I asked him about that and he said all Texans—he says Texians—call their state their country and they even call their own ranches their country as if they were kings. I was never so interested in my life. Never. I've got all the books I could find in the library that might have something about Texas and the Congressional Records since way back and the encyclopædia and a lot of histories."

"Good night!" said Lacey, and closed the door firmly.

Breakfast at the Lynntons' was a pleasant thing. It was done in the English fashion, a movable feast. Doctor Lynnton was likely to breakfast at six and Lacey Lynnton at five or at ten, while other members of the family and assorted guests might appear between seven and eleven. On the long sideboard were the hot dishes cosily covered and freshly

replenished from time to time but certainly the early risers had the best of it. Eggs, kippers, sausages. Hot biscuits, toast, muffins. Tea, coffee, jam, honey.

Leslie Lynnton came in with a rush which she checked at once.

Early as she was, Doctor Lynnton and Bick Benedict were there before her. She looked very young and pale in the little blue dress with the white collar and cuffs, her black hair tied with a ribbon. She had had three hours of sleep.

"Hello!" she said. "Good morning!"

"Why Leslie!" said Doctor Lynnton.

She hurriedly blotted this out by saying, as she helped herself to coffee, "I almost always breakfast with Papa." She looked very straight at Bick Benedict and he at her. She saw in the morning light that his eyes were crinkled at the corners from sun and wind; he looked even taller and broader of shoulder there at breakfast in the sunny room.

"You're looking mighty pert, Miss Leslie," he said inadequately. "You don't look as if you'd been dancing all night."

"I came home at a quarter to eleven," she said quietly, "and I read about Texas until four this morning."

Bick Benedict was astonished and he did not believe her. He smiled rather patronizingly. "Well, what did you learn? It takes a lot of reading, Texas does."

"We really stole Texas, didn't we? I mean. Away from Mexico?"

He jumped as if he had touched a live wire. His eyes were agate. He waited a moment before he trusted himself to speak. "I don't understand the joke," he finally said through stiff lips.

"I'm not joking, Mr. Benedict. It's there in the history books, isn't it? This Mr. Austin moved down there with two or three hundred families from the East, it says, and the Mexicans were polite and said they could settle and homestead if they wanted to, under the rule of Mexico. And the next thing you know they're claiming they want to free themselves from Mexico and they fight and take it. Really! How impolite. I don't mean to be rude, but really!"

Doctor Lynnton glanced at Benedict. He was startled to see that the man was rigid with suppressed anger. The muscles of his jaw stood out



hard and stiff. For a moment it was as though he would rise and leave the room. Or throw the cup in his hand. These Texans.

"Now, now, Leslie," Doctor Lynnton murmured soothingly. "You mustn't talk like that to a Texan. They're touchy. They feel very strongly about their state." He smiled. "Their country, you might almost say. To some of them the United States is their second country. Isn't that so, Benedict?"

"Oh, but I didn't mean to be impolite!" Leslie said before Bick could voice his pent anger. "I was just talking impersonally—about history." She picked up her cup and saucer and came over and sat beside him, cosily, her elbow on the table, she leaned towards him, she peered into his face like an eager child. It was disconcerting, it was maddening, if she had been a man he would have hit her, he told himself. "It's all in the books, it's news to me, I just meant it's so fascinating. It's another world, it sounds so big and new and different. I love it. The cactus and the cowboys and the Alamo and the sky and the horses and the Mexicans and the freedom. It's really America, isn't it? I'm—I'm in love with it."

Bick Benedict's heart gave a lurch. Watch out, he said to himself. Rattlesnakes. Then, to his own surprise he announced, "Texas would be a good place for Virginia women. They're pampered and spoiled out of all reason."

"I'm not. Am I, Papa? But then, I'm not a Virginian."

Horace Lynnton turned to look at his daughter with the appraising gaze of one who is freshly curious. "Oh, you, Leslie. You were born out of your time. You'd have been good in the Civil War, hiding slaves in the underground or, before that, pioneering, maybe, in a covered wagon crossing the prairie with an ox team."

Leslie, stirring her second cup of coffee, considered this and rejected it. "I wouldn't have liked it, except the freedom and no Washington society and all that nonsense. Nothing to fear except scalping by the Indians, no household worries except whether you'd find water on the way. It does sound rather lovely, doesn't it? But awfully uncomfortable. You've brought me up wrong, Papa. I love old silver and Maryland crabs and plenty of hot water day and night with bath salts, and one glass of very cold, very dry champagne."

Bick Benedict waved an arm that dismissed silver, hot water, house, garden, champagne, and the entire Eastern seaboard.

"All this is decadent," he said. "Dying. Or good and dead."

"It isn't!" Leslie contested. "It's been sick, but now it's just coming back to life. If Lincoln had lived another two years. He had plans. The South would have been better after the Civil War instead of broken because a lot of ignorant, greedy——"

"Well," Doctor Lynnton interrupted, very leisurely, and brushing the crumbs off his waistcoat. "I won't have time for this, if the Civil War's going to be fought again."

"Good morning!" cried Mrs. Lynnton from the dining-room doorway in clear ringing tones. "Good morning, everybody." She looked straight at Bick. "Good morning, Lochinvar!"

Bick Benedict, rather red, stammered, "Uh—good—uh——"

"Don't mind Mama," Leslie said, not at all embarrassed. "She's been trying to marry me off for years. And anyway, Mama, if you're going to be geographical, Lochinvar came out of the West, not the South-west. It wouldn't have scanned."

"Leslie reads too much," Mrs. Lynnton explained blandly. "Horace dear, fetch me a sliver of that ham, will you? For a young girl, I mean. But it's her only fault and you wouldn't really call it a fault. Leslie dear, if Mr. Benedict has finished breakfast don't you want to show him the stables?"

"He saw them, Mama. Besides, we've just quarrelled in a polite way about Texas so it's no use your trying to palm me off on him. And anyway Mr. Benedict has three million acres and five hundred thousand cows or whatever they're called in Texas——"

"Head of cattle," Bick suggested, "and not quite five——"

"—head of cattle then. And hundreds of vaqueros and consequently he's engaged to marry the daughter of the owner of the adjoining ranch who, though comparatively poor, is beautiful and has only one million acres and fifteen thousand horses and two hundred thousand head of cattle and six hundred vaqueros."

"What is a vaquero?" Mrs. Lynnton demanded, dignified in defeat.

Jordan Benedict walked round the table to stand beside Leslie as though he were talking to her rather than to her mother. "A vaquero is a Mexican cowboy," he said crisply, with no trace of a drawl. "Did you ever hear the word buckaroo? That's what the old Texas pioneers made of vaquero, they couldn't get the hang of the Spanish word vaquero. You see—vaca, cow. Vaquero—fellow who tends cows."

Mrs. Lynnton must know the worst. "What, may I ask, is the name of the lucky young lady you are marrying, with all those cows?"

Then even Leslie was moved to protest. "Oh dear Mother, that was just my little joke."

Bick Benedict just touched her hand with his forefinger. "It's more or less true—or was. My next-door neighbour does have a daughter—only a next-door neighbour in Texas is at least fifty miles away, usually. And he does have just about all that land and those horses and the cattle. And perhaps there was some idea of my marrying his daughter like the fellow in a book. But I'm not."

CHAPTER 7

AFTER THIRTY-SIX hours of travel the bride and bridegroom seemed to have set up miniature housekeeping in their drawing-room on the Missouri Pacific's crack Sunshine Special. Books and papers and bundles and bags were heaped on couches and racks. A towering edifice of fruit in a basket, untouched, was turning brown under the hot blasts that poured through the screened window. A vast box of chocolates, open on the couch, was coated with the fine sift of dust that filmed the little room.

Bick Benedict looked at Leslie and he was like a man fanned by

ocean breezes, laved in the perfumes of fresh-cut meadows. It was incredible that any woman could appear as cool and fresh as she after thirty-six hours in the gritty luxury of a train drawing-room. She seemed to have an unlimited supply of fresh blouses and just to watch her open a filmy handkerchief and to catch the scent that emanated from it as she shook out its white folds was a refreshment to the onlooker. She brushed her hair a great deal. She poured eau-de-Cologne into the lavatory wash-basin and bathed her wrists and her temples and the scent of this, too, pricked the grateful nostrils.

"I don't know how other brides feel on their 'honeymoon,'" she now said, "Mr. Benedict, sir. But I'm having a lovely time."

"Well, thanks."

"It isn't only you. It's travelling. I love train-riding even if it's hot and dusty."

"If we'd had the private coach as I wanted——"

"Private coaches for two people are immoral. And anyway, they're dull."

"Well, thanks again."

"I'll bet you," said the bride, "that this minute, sight unseen, I know more about Texas than you do."

"Mrs. Benedict, if I may call you that, I am taking the filly known as My Mistake and the young woman formerly known as Leslie Lynnton, off the hands of Doctor and Mrs. Lynnton, respectively. The understanding was that the one can run and the other is intelligent as well as lovely. Perhaps one of you has got the wrong name."

"Leslie Benedict," she mused. "It isn't as pretty as Leslie Lynnton."

"But you're prettier. I don't say I'm taking full credit. But you are."

"It's the fresh air," she said. "And the regular hours. Darling, will you let me know the minute we reach Texas?"

"Texas isn't exactly a secret."

"It's different from other states, isn't it? It looks different?"

He was seated opposite her on one of the settees. Now he leaned forward and clasped his hands between his knees and smiled up at her, so earnest so eager so alive. "You're a funny girl. You didn't marry me just for the trip to Texas, did you?"

"I won't say I didn't."

He laughed aloud then and held out his hand for hers. They looked at one another a moment, smiling, and then they became serious and silent.

The sound of the drawing-room door buzzer was like an electric shock. Bick shouted, "Come in!" It was the dining-car steward, sallow and sleek and obsequious.

He purred. He bowed. "Parn me," he said. "But I thought you'd want to get your order in early, before the rush. You can just run your eye over the menu, but I have a couple of suggestions. Our last stop we took on some——"

"Oh, let's have dinner in the dining-car," Leslie said. "With the rest of the world. Let's have olives—the big black ones—in a bowl of cracked ice with celery. And melons. And brook trout."

"Brook trout!" Bick protested doubtfully. "They don't have——"

"But we do," interrupted the steward with injured dignity. "I was just trying to tell Mrs. Benedict. We took them on at Baxter just for our special passengers."

It had been like that from the moment they had turned their faces towards the West. Passenger agents had come aboard at various stops for the sole purpose of inquiring about their comfort.

"They behave as if you were royalty," Leslie had said. "Do they always do that? Or just for brides and bridegrooms?"

"The Benedicts have been in these parts a long time," Bick explained. "And we travel a lot. And Reata steers travel a lot, too. They're the really important passengers when it comes to railway arithmetic."

Leslie thought that her mother would have loved all this kow-towing on the part of railway crew and officials. In those brief days before the hurried wedding Mrs. Lynnton had chanted her refrain endlessly.

"Jordan Benedict of the famous Benedict ranch in Texas, you know. It's practically a kingdom. It's a kind of legend Doctor Lynnton says."

The Benedict family had not come to the wedding in great numbers. Bick's younger brother, Bowie, had come as best man and of course his cousin Roady from Washington and his sister Maudie Lou Placer and her husband Clint. But his older sister Luz, the one who kept house for

him at the ranch, the one who had never married, couldn't come.

"Luz brought me up, really," Bick had told Leslie. "She has been like a mother to me. She had to be. She's nineteen years older than I am. She looks like Great-grandma Benedict. She even tries to look like her. Once she got the old hoop skirts out of the attic and went out into the pasture and tried roping in that crazy outfit because the story goes that that's what Great-grandma Benedict did back in the late fifties. She does her hair like her, too. Two braids in a kind of crown on top of her head."

"Like pictures of Mrs. Lincoln," Leslie observed thoughtfully. "Luz. What an unusual name."

"It's Spanish. It means light. She's wonderful, really," he said, as though someone had said she was not. "Right out of a Western movie, you'll think. She can do anything a cowboy can. The boys are all crazy about her, but they're scared of her too."

When the actual week of the wedding arrived there was a telegram. Luz was ill with influenza, she had a fever of a hundred and two. The doctor said she absolutely must not travel. . . .

Bick seemed perturbed by this out of all proportion to its importance, but Leslie received the news with a certain amused thoughtfulness.

He said with excusable stiffness, "I don't see why you find this amusing."

"I didn't know I was looking amused. Forgive me. I was thinking. You know it's just possible that your sister Luz is sick to order. Sometimes those things happen when people are upset. Papa says he often encounters cases like that."

"I suppose Luz got a hundred and two just to order. Is that what you mean?"

"Lots of mothers do."

"Luz isn't my mother. What's the matter with you, Leslie?"

"Wives, I mean."

"Look, Leslie, have you gone loco?"

"Big sisters sometimes think they're wives. Or mothers."

This was a maddening climax for Bick. "I think you must be ill yourself," he had said with a harshness unusual in a prospective bridegroom.

But certainly Bick Benedict had no cause for complaint once the furor

of the wedding was past. His bride was ardent and lovely and incredibly understanding. Three days of their honeymoon were spent in New York where the tall Texan in the big white Stetson and the starry-eyed girl in grey caused a turning of heads even on Manhattan's blasé Fifth Avenue.

He seemed, curiously enough, in no great hurry to start the journey home. Strangely, too, he seemed not to have a great deal of ready money. They went to the theatre, they ate well, they drove in the Park, they shopped a little but there was none of the lavish moneyed carelessness that one would expect from the possessor of millions of acres of land and hundreds of thousands of cattle. Perhaps he felt that some sort of explanation was called for. "Cattle men don't have a lot of ready cash," he said not at all apologetically. "We put it back into the ranch. More beef cattle, better stock, experimenting with new breeds. A good bull can cost twenty thousand dollars."

The bride had her practical side. "He can bring in twenty thousand too, can't he? If you sell him. Or his—uh—sons?"

"You don't sell a bull like that. You buy him."

At the unreasonableness of this she laughed. But then she said seriously enough, "I hope you're not stingy by nature, Jordan darling. Because that's very bad for you. We've never had any money but we've always been lavish."

"Perhaps that's why."

"Why what? Oh. Just for that perhaps you'd better buy me something very expensive. Not that I want it. But as a lesson to you. Not the price of a bull but a calf, say."

Now, as they neared the end of their journey, the little luxury room on the train grew hotter, hotter, became stifling, the electric fan paddled the heat and slapped their faces with it, the whole body was fevered with heat and dust. Another kind of fever possessed Leslie, too, it was the fire of deep interest and anticipation, so that she quite ignored the physical discomfort of the stuffy train.

"You can see miles!" she said. "Miles and miles and miles!" She had her flushed face at the ineffectually screened window, like a child. "It's sort of frightening, isn't it—like something that defies you to conquer

it? So huge. How big is it, really? Not in figures, I can't understand figures, but tell me in a kind of picture."

This was home again, this was what he knew and loved. "Well, let's see now. How can I—look, you know the way the map of the United States looks? Well, if you take all New England, and then add New York State and New Jersey and Pennsylvania and Ohio and Illinois, and put the whole thing together in one block, why, you'd have a state the size of Texas. That's how big it is." He was triumphant, as though he himself had created this vast area in a god-like gesture.

It was late afternoon when they arrived at Vientecito. "Here we are!" he said and peered out through the windows to scan the platform and the vehicles beyond in the swirling dust. "But who's that?" A huge Packard. In the driver's seat was a stocky young Mexican with powerful shoulders. About twenty, Leslie thought; a square face, a square brow, his hair like a brush growing thick thick and up from his forehead. He was very dark, very quiet, he did not smile.

There was no one else in the car to meet them. The man got out of the car, he stood at the open door looking uncertainly at Bick. He did not glance at Leslie. Bick's face was cold with anger, there was a curious underlay of white beneath his deep-coated tan, his jaw muscle swelled as he set his teeth. The two men spoke in Spanish.

"What are you doing here? Where is Jett?"

"Señorita Luz said she needed him. She sent me in his place."

"You don't know about a car. Here. Pile these bags in the back. Where's the pick-up? There are trunks."

"Nothing was said about sending the pick-up."

Bick's lips were a straight thin line, his fists were clenched.

This phenomenon Leslie surveyed with lively interest and no alarm.

"Jordan, you look bursting. I must learn Spanish."

The boy, very serious and dignified, was inexpertly piling suit-cases into the back baggage section. This accomplished, he was about to take the driver's seat. "Out!" barked Bick. The boy paused, turned. Bick gave him the baggage tickets. In Spanish he said, "You will wait here. The pick-up will be sent. It may be two hours, it may be midnight. You will wait here."

The boy inclined his head; Leslie came towards him, she put out her hand. "I am Mrs. Benedict," she said. "What is your name?"

The dark eyes met hers. Then they swung like a startled child's to encounter Bick's ice-blue stare. The boy bent over her hand, he did not touch it, he bowed in a curiously formal gesture, his hand over his heart, like a courtier. His eyes were cast down. "What eyelashes!" Leslie said over her shoulder to Bick. "I wish I had them."

"Dimodeo," the boy said. "I am called Dimodeo Rivas."

"Leslie! Get into the car, please. We're leaving." Bick's voice was a command. She smiled at the boy, she turned leisurely, she was somewhat surprised to see her husband's face scowling from the driver's seat.

With a neck-cracking jerk the car leaped away. She had never been a timorous woman, but their speed now seemed to her maniacal. Bick was silent, his face set and stern. Well, she knew that when men looked like that you pretended not to notice and pretty soon they forgot all about it.

"How flat it is! And big. And the horizon is—well, there just isn't any it's so far away. I thought there would be lots of cows. I don't see any."

"Cows!" he said in a tone of utter rage.

She was, after all, still one of the tart-tongued Lynnton girls. "I don't see why you're so put out because that boy came instead of someone else. Or the family. After all, it's so far from the railway."

"Far!" In that same furious tone. "It's only ninety miles."

She glanced at the speedometer. It pointed to eighty-five. Well, no wonder! At this rate they'd be home in an hour or so. Home. For an engulfing moment she had a monstrous feeling of being alone with a strange man in an unknown world—a world of dust and desert and heat and glare and some indefinable thing she had never before experienced. Maybe all brides feel like this, she thought. Suddenly wanting to go home to their mother and father and their own bed.

He was speaking again in a lower tone now, but a controlled anger vibrated beneath it. "Making a fuss over that Mexican boy. We don't do that here in Texas."

"But this is still the United States, isn't it? You were being mean to him. What did he do?"

The speedometer leaped to ninety. "We have our own way of doing things. You're a Texan now. Please remember that."

"But I'm not anyone I wasn't. I'm myself. What's geography to do with it?"

"Texas isn't geography. It's history. It's a world in itself."

She said something far in advance of her day. "There is no world in itself."

"You've read too damn many books."

She began to laugh suddenly—a laugh of surprise and discovery. "We're quarrelling! Jordan, we're having our first quarrel. Well, it's nice to get it over before we reach—home."

To her horror then he brought his head down to his hands on the wheel, a gesture of utter contrition and one that might have killed them both. At her cry of alarm he straightened. His right hand reached over to cover her hands clasped so tightly in her fright. "My darling," he said. "My darling girl." Then, strangely, "We mustn't quarrel. We've got to stand together."

Against the brassy sky there rose like a mirage a vast edifice that was all towers and domes and balconies and porticoes and iron fretwork. In size and general architecture it somewhat resembled the palace known as the Alhambra, with a dash of the Missouri Pacific Railway station which they had just left behind them.

"What's that! Is it—are we near the ranch, Jordan?"

"We've been on it the last eighty miles, practically ever since we got outside Viento. That's Reata. That's home."

"But you said it was a ranch! You said Reata was a ranch!"

CHAPTER 8

AND THERE ahead of them was the town. The town of Benedict. A huge square-lettered sign said:

WELCOME TO BENEDICT!

pop. 4,739

They flashed into town, they were streaking down the wide main

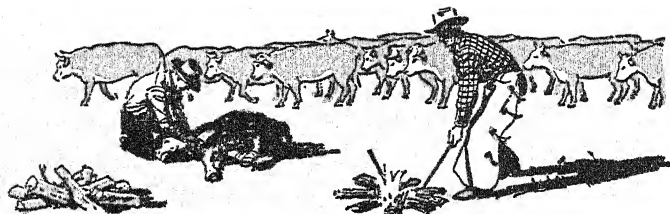
street. "Please drive slower, darling," she said. "I want to see." But even as they roared through the town Leslie felt herself in a strange exciting new land. Dark faces everywhere, but not like the ebony faces of the Virginia streets. These were Latin faces; fine-boned Spanish faces; darker heavier Mexican-Indian faces. Even the shop-front signs were exhilaratingly different. A little sun-baked draper's whose sign said BARATO. Bargain Sale. She knew enough Spanish for that, at least. Sallow women in black with little black shawls over their heads under the blasting sun. Dusty oleanders by the roadside. Big beef-fed men in wide-brimmed Stetsons and shirt sleeves and high-heeled boots that gave their feet a deceptive arched elegance. Dark little men squatting on their haunches at the street corners. Lean sunburned tall men propped up against the shops. Small houses baking, grassless, by the road. Dust-bitten houses grey as desert bones.

"What's that! What in the world is that!"

In the court-house square facing the street was a monstrous plate-glass case as large as a sizeable room made of thick transparent glass on all sides. Within this, staring moodily out at a modern world, stood a stuffed and mounted Longhorn steer. A huge animal, his horn spread was easily nine feet from tip to tip. Wrinkled ancient horns like those of some mythical monster. "What's it for? Do they worship it, or something?"

"He's a Longhorn—the last of the Reata Longhorn herd. They roamed the range wild a hundred years ago. Now they're extinct. Way back in the days of the Spanish missions in the 1600's the Spanish brought the first livestock with them. When the missions were abandoned the stock was left behind and pretty soon there were thousands and thousands of head covering the whole country. Tough mean animals. Hoofs and horns and hide like iron and the meat like leather. That's what we used to call beef, not so many years ago. And now there's the last Longhorn a museum piece in a glass case."

"Who'd have thought a cow could be so romantic! What are they like now—the Reata cows? And where are they? I haven't seen any. I don't believe you really have any. You've dragged me down here under false pretences."



He laughed whole-heartedly and the sound delighted her. "Oh, we've still got one or two," he said airily, "hiding out in the mesquite and around. Wait till you see the new breed. We've been ten years experimenting and I think now we've just about got it. We brought Herefords from England and bred them to the best of the native stock. And now I'm breeding the cream of that to the big Kashmirs. Oriental stock. They can take the heat and they've got a body oil that discourages ticks and fleas. The King Ranch crowd and some of the other boys are experimenting with Brahmans but I'm the Kashmir Kid. Wait till you see some of those Kashmir-Hereford bulls. They look like a house on legs. There's never been anything like them in the world. In the world!"

His face was brilliant with life, the silent man of an hour ago was a young, eager boy. Some deep inner instinct pinched her heart sharply. That is his real love, it said. You are just an incident. You are a figure in a pattern you don't even understand.

Now the town was behind them, they were again in the open country. Again she saw the house, its great bulk against the brassy sky, its walls shimmering in the heat. She stared at it in a sort of panic but she asked quietly enough, "Did you build it?"

"The Big House? Lord, no! My father built it. He said he built it for Ma but I reckon he really built it to show the cotton crowd that he wasn't just a big high-powered cattle man. He wanted to show them that he was in high cotton too."

"High cotton?"

"Here in Texas the cotton rich always snooted the cattle rich. And now if this oil keeps coming into Texas the old cattle crowd will look down their noses at the oil upstarts." He pointed with his left hand.

"See that low greyish building about half a mile from the Big House? That's the old ranch house. That's where I was born. It's always been called the Main House."

She stared for a long minute at the low rambling outlines of the old house, so small and colourless in comparison with the magnificence and ornamentation of the great mansion. She leaned towards him gently, her arm pressed his arm. "I like it. It looks like a house to be born in." He was silent again. She glanced sideways at him. "Who lives in it now? Your sister Luz, does she—will she live there?"

"Luz lives with me," he said. "With us. In the Big House. She's run it ever since Ma died twenty-five years ago." He laughed a short mirthless little laugh. "Some say she runs the ranch."

"It will all be strange to me at first. I'll have to learn how things are done here. I hope she won't—mind."

"Hard to say what Luz will or won't mind. Let's just relax and be happy we're home."

She longed to say, But a wife runs her house, doesn't she? A wife wants to manage her own household and plan things and decide things and be alone with her husband. Some new wisdom told her to say nothing.

They were approaching a gate—a wooden one, cross-barred—and a line of fence that stretched away endlessly. On the other side of the fence, facing them, were perhaps fifty men on horseback. They sat like bronze equestrian statues. Erect, vital, they made a dazzling frieze against prairie and sky. Their great hats shaded the dark ardent eyes. Their high-heeled boots were polished to a glitter; narrow, pointed, they fitted like a glove. Their saddles, their hatbands, their belts were hand-tooled.

On either side of the gate they made a single line, reined up side by side like cavalry on parade. Immobile they sat in their saddles, they did not smile, they did not raise a hand in greeting. At the gate, mounted on a splendid palomino, was a man of middle age, dark like the others but with an almost indefinable difference. Authority was in his bearing. Slim and small, he was a figure of striking elegance. Now his horse moved daintily forward with little mincing steps like those of a ballet

dancer on her toes. The man swung low in his saddle and opened the gate, he drew up squarely then in the path of the car.

He spoke the greeting. "Viva el señor! Vivan los novios!"

From the men then, like a chant, "Viva el señor! Vivan los novios!"

She tweaked his coat sleeve. "Jordan, what's it mean—los novios? What do I do?"

But Bick Benedict nodded carelessly to the men, he raised a hand in greeting and gravely he spoke his thanks in the Spanish tongue. Then, out of the corner of his mouth, to Leslie, "They've put on a real show for you, honey. Welcome to the bridal couple. Say gracias, will you?"

She was enchanted, she opened the car door, she stepped to the running board and leaned far out. "Thank you!" she called, and her voice was warm and lovely with emotion. "Gracias! Gracias! Thank you for the beautiful welcome!"

"Don't overdo it please, Leslie."

"Can't I blow them a kiss? I'm in love with all of them."

"Come in and sit down. We're moving."

"Especially that beautiful café-au-lait Buffalo Bill."

"Polo's got ten grandchildren. He'd be shocked to his Mexican core."

Now the car made the last curve in the long drive and there they were at the foot of the great broad stone steps that led to the doorway of the house.

No one came to the car, no one stood in the doorway, all was quiet, breathless, waiting, like the castle of the Sleeping Beauty. Nothing could be really sinister in sunlight, she said to herself. And aloud, "It's siesta time, isn't it? Just like in Ol' Virginny, though we never paid much attention to it."

He held out his hand to her. "Neither do we." He looked up at the house, together they began to mount the steps.

"Would it sound too sickening and coy if I asked you to carry me through the doorway, just for luck?" And she smiled. "Of course I'm a big girl—"

He stared at her incredulously, he saw that her lips were trembling. He picked her up in his arms as if she had been a child, and so up the steps, across the broad veranda and through the doorway, her arm about

his neck, her cheek against his. He bent his head impetuously and they kissed long and silently.

No sound disturbed the utter silence of the enormous entrance hall. Yet Leslie had a feeling that on the other side of every door and wall there were ears listening, listening.

They stood in the middle of the great hall just like tourists, Leslie thought.

"What's going on here!" yelled Bick. He clapped his hands. "Tomás! Vincente! Lupe! Petra!" Then, in a great bawl that topped all the rest, "Luz! Come out here before I come and get you."

From nowhere there appeared a little plump woman. Until this moment Leslie had not been aware that she had pictured this older sister of Jordan's as a tall dark woman with straight black hair and straight black brows. But this Luz who came towards them was a pink-cheeked bustling little body in a pink ruffled dress and a bright red hat. Thick plaits of grey-white hair and, in unexpected contrast, very black eyes that gave the effect of having been mistakenly placed in a face meant for blue eyes.

Her voice was shrill and high, she walked with a little clatter of short steps, hers were the smallest feet Leslie had ever seen.

"Jurden! Stop that bawling like a calf's just been branded." Her manner was brisk, not to say hearty. She kissed her brother on the cheek, a mere peck. She came to Leslie. "Howdy, Miss Lynnton," said Luz Benedict. "Excuse my being late." An added flush suffused the pink rouged cheek.

Bick Benedict put one hand on his wife's shoulder. "Now, Luz, don't you go rowelling Leslie first thing. This is Mrs. Jordan Benedict, and don't you forget it."

CHAPTER 9

"**W**E LOOKED for you a week ago," said Luz. She took Leslie's hand in a grip of steel and smiled up at her.

"But we didn't plan to come sooner," Leslie said. "What made you think we did?"

"I didn't think Bick would stay away. All the spring work to be done. It's the worst time of the year to be away. The big spring round-up."

"But this is—was—our honeymoon!"

"No honeymoon's as important as round-up at Reata." There was the sound of a motor in the drive.

"Jett!" yelled Bick, as he started towards the door. "Jett! Come on in here."

"Don't you want to see the house?" Luz said hurriedly. "Let me show you the house." She grasped Leslie's arm firmly.

"Yes. Yes, of course," said Leslie. "But I'll wait. I'd rather wait for my—for Jordan."

"Oh, Jordan and Jett are everlastingly jangling about something. Come on." The sound of the men's voices rose in argument. Leslie glimpsed this Jett Rink in the doorway now—a muscular young fellow with a curiously powerful bull-like neck and shoulders. His attitude, his tone were belligerent. About twenty, Leslie decided. She decided, too, that he was an unpleasant young man.

"She wanted for Dimodeo to go, not me," he was saying. "It was her doing."

"You'll do as I say."

"Tell that to Madama. Her hauling one way and you another. Tell me who's boss round here and I'll do like they say."

Leslie turned away, annoyed at the boy's hard insolence. Through open double doors she glimpsed other rooms, they seemed as vast as this. She looked about her, interestedly. Luz Benedict had disappeared. Madama. The boy Jett had called her Madama. Funny, her going off like that.

Everywhere on the walls were the mounted heads of deer, of buffalo, of catamounts, coyotes, mountain lions; the vicious tusked faces of javelina or wild hog, red fox, grey fox, and two sad-eyed Longhorns whose antlered spread and long morose muzzles dwarfed all the other masks.

As she stood there Bick joined her, and took her hand. "Leslie! I thought you'd gone upstairs with Luz."

"She was very nice, she wanted to show me the house." Suddenly she had a horrible feeling that she was going to cry—she who so rarely wept

even when a child. She raised her swimming eyes and looked at him. "I waited for you. I want my husband to show me his house."

"Of course, my darling, of course. Things have kind of gone loco round here while I've been gone. Luz can get the whole place in a——"

The tap-tap-tap of Luz Benedict's little feet sounded on the stone floor. "Oh, there you are, Bick! Going off and leaving this poor little bride of yours alone. She wouldn't come with me. Come on, Bick. You show her the house. I'll tag along." Leslie and Bick went hand in hand but Luz chattered and clattered close behind them. "And this is the big room and that there is the little sitting-room and this is the library. . . ."

"How wonderful!" Leslie exclaimed. "How interesting!" as they walked through the dim vast rooms. Everything was on a gargantuan scale, as though the house had been built and furnished for a race of giants. Chairs were the size of couches, couches the size of beds. There were chairs of cowhide with fanciful backs fashioned from horns. Luz was displaying the monolithic rooms as a hostess guides a guest whose stay is so temporary that all must be crowded into a brief time.

Leslie was weary, warm, her face was burning, her eyes smarted. The three ascended the great stone stairway now.

Fifty bedrooms, Bick had said. Leslie had assumed that this was a figure of speech. Now it seemed to her that there were acres of dull bare bedrooms with their neat utility beds and their drab utility chests of drawers and an electric light bulb in the middle of the ceiling. A hotel. A big, bare unattractive hotel with no guests. A terrible thought occurred to Leslie.

"Have they ever been filled—all these rooms?"

"My yes!" Luz shrilled happily. "And then some. Times we had 'em sleeping in cots out here in the hall."

Luz clattered on down the hall, she pointed briskly to a big room whose door stood open. Two Mexican women and a man were bending over open suitcases which Leslie recognized as Jordan's.

"That's Bick's room," Luz said breezily.

She marched on down the hall, turned right, turned left. "And this," she said, "is your room."

There was the fraction of a moment of utter silence. Then Leslie

began to laugh. She laughed as helplessly as one does who has been under fearful strain and then Bick too was laughing, they laughed leaning against each other as two people laugh who love each other and who have been apart in spirit and are now suddenly brought together again.

The black eyes stared at them, the pink face was rigid with the resentment of one who does not share the joke.

Bick wiped his eyes, he patted Luz's shoulder. "Look, sis, Leslie and I are married. We're having these two big front connecting rooms where the breeze'll get us, one for a bedroom and one a kind of sitting-room where we can sit and talk if we want to."

"Away from me, I suppose."

"Why no, honey, we don't mean——"

"Yes," said Leslie then, with terrible distinctness. "Away from anyone when we want to be. When we want to talk together." Then, at the look on the woman's face, "Not secrets, Luz. Just husband and wife talk." Poor dear, she doesn't know.

"Get Lupe and one of the other girls," Bick said hastily. "They'll fix us up. I hope those trunks got here. They could unpack while we're eating supper."

"Supper!" Leslie repeated rather faintly. She realized now that she had vaguely envisaged a tea table on their arrival, with hot tea and little thin sandwiches.

"Supper's at six," Luz announced firmly. "How'd you like a cup of coffee straight away? I clean forgot, with Bick yapping at Jett."

"Oh, I'd love it."

Bick now pressed a wall button. "That'll fetch somebody. Leslie, I'm going to take a look at the ruin that's gone on while I've been away. . . . Now Luz, don't you get sore again. . . . Anything you need, Leslie, just tell Luz."

He was gone. "Well, now," said Luz, and settled herself in a chair, "the girls will fix you up in a jiffy. I hope you didn't bring too much fussy stuff. We're plain folks out here. I ain't got enough clothes to dust a fiddle."

It came to Leslie with a shock that this woman was acting a part. Was purposely talking a kind of native lingo. The black eyes were

darting here and there as the suitcases and the bags were opened. Lupe had come in with a tray on which was coffee.

Leslie said, "Uh—Bick told me you went to Wellesley when you were a girl."

"Yes, the Benedict girls go to Wellesley for two years anyway, and the boys to Harvard, but it never takes. I don't talk like college, do I?"

"Perhaps not. I don't know."

She felt better now that she had had the coffee. She had gulped it down, hot and strong, "That was lovely," she said. Lupe was taking things out of the bags. She was a dark silent woman in a shapeless clean dress of no definable colour pattern or material. On her feet were soft shapeless black sandals. The young girl Petra had joined her. Now the clean bare room with its big white bed, its neat wooden chairs, its stark table burst suddenly into bloom like a spring garden released from winter. Lacy filmy silken things. Soft beribboned flowered things. Scent. Colour.

"My!" Luz exclaimed inadequately. "Where you thinking of wearing those?"

With a sinking heart Leslie thought of the trunks that were even now on the road from Vientecito—trunks crammed with more dresses, more chiffons, silks, laces. The maids caught up the scented silken things and gazed at them as a child would look at a toy, in wonderment. As they hung the garments in the inadequate cupboards they chattered to each other in Spanish, hard and fast. Suddenly, Leslie felt an unbearable weariness and lassitude. She wanted to be alone. More than anything in the world she wanted to be alone. It was not an urge merely, it was a necessity.

"Do you know," she began haltingly, "it's the queerest thing but I feel so—so terribly tired. And sleepy, too. I can hardly——"

"Texas," Luz said triumphantly. "Lots of strangers from up North feel like that. Thin-blooded is what's wrong with them. Texas air is so rich you can nourish off it like it was food."

"That must be it. And everything so new and strange. I just thought if I could have a tiny nap before dinner—supper. And a bath."

"Go at once," Luz commanded the two women. "Cierra la puerta."

As they went Leslie remembered her two-word Spanish vocabulary. "Gracias! Muy gracias!"

They were gone, Luz following them. She stood with her back against the door for a moment like a woman in a melodrama. Don't be silly. Where did you think you were going to live? Paris? This is all strange and wonderful and tomorrow you'll love it, but you're tired and tense. That's all that's wrong with you, Leslie Lynnton Benedict.

She went through the pleasant relaxing ritual of the bath, then threw herself across the great double bed and was immediately asleep in spite of the strong coffee and the bewildering day.

She awoke to a bedlam of sound. A brazen gong was beating within the house. An iron-tongued bell was shattering the air outside. She sprang up, she ran a comb through her short clipped hair and arranged its waves tenderly over each cheek in the mode of the day. I don't care, she argued to herself, I'm going to put on a pretty tea-gown for dinner, that's what they're for, I'm not going to dress in linsey-woolsey just because I live on a ranch.

She put on the filmy tea-gown with the lace fish-tail in the back. The clamour had ceased, the sound of the brazen gong had died away. She went carefully to the hall and peered over the banisters. The vast hall below was empty but she heard the murmur of voices and now they were raised in something very near a shout. She followed the direction of the voices. Jordan and Luz Benedict were talking with considerable animation in the music-room. Their voices were loud and, Leslie sensed, angry.

"Maudie's a hog for money," Luz was saying, "she wouldn't care if the ranch was put in sheep if she could get more out of it. And Placer—well—Placer! A pair of fools, but Maudie's the worst, because she knows better." At this somewhat ambiguous statement she saw Leslie in the doorway. "Well, come on in. Where's the party at? My!"

For one terrible instant Leslie sensed that her husband had momentarily forgotten that he was married. Then he jumped up, he came to her and took her two hands in his and held her off to look at her. "You're prettier than a sunrise. Just look at her, Luz!"

"You look kind of wonderful yourself," she said, and meant it though

he wore boots, brown canvas trousers and brush jacket, a brown shirt open at the throat.

A concert grand piano dominated the room, it bore the Steinway stamp. "What a beautiful piano!" Leslie exclaimed. "Who plays? You, Luz?" She opened the lid, the keys were yellow, she ran a tentative handful of notes, it was badly out of tune.

"The strings go to rusting," Luz said. "Bick plays a little and so do I, Ma made us all take lessons, like it or not, but there's no time for piano-playing on a ranch."

"Why not?" Leslie inquired innocently.

"There's too much work to do." Luz seemed always to speak with belligerence. Now the gong sounded again furiously from the dining-room. "Come on," said Luz, "let's go eat."

The great table would have seated twenty, it was covered with a mammoth white table-cloth. Down its middle, at five-foot intervals, were clustered little colonies of ketchup bottles, chilli sauce, vinegar, oil, salt, pepper, sugar bowl, cream jug.

Luz took charge. "Bick sits there of course. You sit there. I sit here." The three huddled at one end of the table, Bick at the head. Places were laid for ten.

Leslie sat down, she tucked her absurd chiffons about her, she shivered a little in the damp air of the vast vaulted room through which the Gulf wind blew a ceaseless stream. She eyed the empty places. "Is there company?"

"No, thank goodness for once," Luz said. "But you never know on a ranch whether there'll be two or twenty. Folks drop in."

Two Mexican girls came in, carrying platters and vegetable dishes. There was steak—not the broiled steaks of the Eastern seaboard, crisp on the outside, pink on the inside, juicy and tender and thick. These were enormous fried slabs, flat, grey, served with a thick flour gravy. Mashed potatoes. Tinned peas. Pickles. Huge soft rolls. Jelly. Tinned peaches. Chocolate cake. It was fundamental American food cooked and served at its worst.

Wrestling, Leslie found that the steak once cut could not be chewed. She ate her mashed potatoes, she ate her peas, and tried not to think of

little broilers and strawberry meringue and lobster bisque and spoon bread.

"Doesn't she look lovely, Luz?" Bick was saying.

"Certainly does," Luz agreed, without enthusiasm. "I was just wondering where at she was thinking she'd wear all those party dresses."

"Don't let Luz fool you, just because she goes round looking like an old daguerreotype. It's a pose of hers. Texas girls are mighty dressy. Wait till you see them, they go to Chicago and New York for their doodahs."

Here Luz made a bewildering about-face. "They don't have to," she said spiritedly. "We've got plenty of stores right here in Hermoso and Houston and Dallas and around."

"That's so," Bick agreed. "I heard that Neiman-Marcus dresses the cotton crowd up in Dallas now and the new oil rich. They say they've got stuff there makes Bergdorf and Saks in New York look like Indian trading posts."

Luz smiled a little secret smile. "You'll have a chance to see for yourself tomorrow."

Bick said, "Leslie's going out with me tomorrow. There's a roomful of riding-clothes here in the house, Leslie. All sizes."

Luz cut in: "The girls are coming. We've fixed up a real old-fashioned barbecue tomorrow noon. Out at Number Two."

"Call it off."

"Likely. With some of them on the way this minute from every which place. It's a welcome for the bride."

"How lovely!" Leslie said weakly. She was afraid to look at the fuming Bick.

"Damn it, Luz! Why don't you mind your own business! Leslie wants to see the ranch."

"She'll be seeing it on the way."

"I don't think she'd like a barbecue."

Leslie began to laugh a little hysterically. "If it's me you're talking about I'm right here. Remember? And of course I'd love a barbecue. It's like a picnic, isn't it?"

Dinner was finished. Bick rose abruptly. "This is different. I know what you Virginians mean by a picnic. Chicken and ham and champagne cup and peach ice-cream."

She went to him, she looked up into his eyes. "But if that was the kind of picnic I wanted for the rest of my life I wouldn't be here, would I?"

The little clatter of Luz Benedict's heels, the high shrill voice. "Gill Dace is waiting on you, he phoned twice."

"Yes, I know. I'm going down now."

"Where is it?" Leslie asked.

"Gill Dace is the vet. He's the man who doctors all the four-footed characters and there isn't a more important man on the ranch. I'll take you down some day soon." He kissed her lightly on the cheek, then he was off down the hall. She heard the sound of the car roaring down the road.

Luz was standing on the stairway waiting for her to ascend. "I guess you'll find things different out here from what you're used to."

Leslie managed a light gaiety. "I want it to be different."

Solemnly they were ascending the stairs. Leslie heard herself making polite conversation. "Are they all nearby neighbours—the girls?"

Luz laughed a sharp little cackle. "Texas, anything less than a hundred miles is considered next door. Only real nearby one is Vashti Hake and she's better than sixty miles. The Hake ranch."

Leslie was tempted to ask if this Vashti Hake was the girl whom Jordan in spite of family pressure had not married. Better not.

Luz was still rattling on, Leslie forced herself to listen, standing there in the upper hall, a politely interested smile on her lips, the light glaring down on her tired eyes.

"Texas ranch folks, a lot of them, have gone to living in town and only come out to the ranch when they feel like it. The Hakes and us and two, three more around are about the only ones left hereabouts who live on the place, summer and winter. Of the big countries, that is. Of course, the Klebergs over at the King ranch they do too. There used to be a saying the Benedict men and the Hake and Beezer men, they were married to their ranches."

Leslie held out her hand. "Good night, Luz. I seem to be awfully tired. I'll write to Mama and Papa and then I think I'll——" Her voice trailed off, empty.

"Sure I can't help you with anything?"

"No. No really."

"Good night." The heels pounded down the hallway. Over her shoulder she tossed a final word. "I'll wait up for Bick like always."

CHAPTER 10

LESLIE AWOKE next morning to the most exquisite of morning smells—hot fresh coffee and baking bread. Piercing shafts of light stabbed the drawn window blinds. The wind again. The wind the wind hot and dry. Far-away shouts. The thud of horses' hoofs.

She glanced at the wedding-gift bedside clock. It was six o'clock. Curiously enough she felt rested, refreshed. Bick was not beside her, he was nowhere to be seen or heard. In her slippers and dressing-gown she went into the hall, and called, very clearly, "Lupe! Petra!"

And there was Lupe the silent one and behind her Petra, the younger one, less sombre and secret. Buenos días, señora. Buenos días, señora. Buenos días Petra buenos días Lupe if this keeps up I'll be speaking Spanish in no time. On the little tray in Petra's hand was the ubiquitous coffee. The delicious aroma pricked the senses. Leslie drank the brew sweet and black and hot.

"Mmm! Delicious!" she said.

The two nodded violently, their faces broke into smiles. "Delicioso, sí! Delicioso!"

It was the nearest approach to friendliness that they had shown. She wondered about them a little. It was curious, their manner, not unfriendly but withdrawn even for a servant—strange, as though they wished to be as unnoticeable as possible. They moved silently, fluidly and with remarkable inefficiency. It was much as though children were trying to help and only succeeded in getting in the way.

But Leslie had decided that nothing would upset her today. A new day, a new home, a new life. Adventure and strangeness and novelty,

that was what she had always wanted—freedom from convention and custom grown meaningless. And here it was.

She bathed, listening for Bick's returning footsteps, then put on one of her plainer day-time frocks, and a pair of white suède shoes.

Luz greeted her in the dining-room. "My, you sure look dolled up. You must of got up before breakfast to get all that on, as we say here."

Leslie laughed, but not very merrily. "I was just going to say that you look as fresh as if you'd slept twelve hours. But I heard you and Jordan—it was you, wasn't it?—talking at six this morning."

"Sure was. Bick and me, we have our coffee and talkee every morning of our lives at five, sit and talk and get things rounded up for the day. Any other way we'd never get a head start."

Leslie stood at the long table's edge, her smile sweet, her eyes steady. "I know. There must be such a lot to do on an enormous ranch like this. And this house. Now I'll be able to take a lot of the household duties off your hands. I thought we might have a little talk perhaps this morning——"

"Now don't you go getting yourself beat out." Luz sat smiling up at her from the chair into which she had dropped at the table. She poured herself a cup of coffee from the massive pot, she slopped a great dollop of cream into it and two heaped teaspoonfuls of sugar. "You look real ganted I was saying to Bick. Not real strong. We want for you to get a little meat on your bones, and have a nice time."

Leslie felt the colour rush into her face. Careful now, she heard her father's voice say. Slow now. "That's so good of you, Luz. But I'm naturally slim, we all are, but I'm really very strong and well. I'm never ill."

"Me too," Luz agreed, her manner all amiability. "Never sick a day in my life."

"But you were ill. You had influenza and couldn't come to the wedding."

She could have bitten her tongue out for having yielded to an impulse so childish.

Luz laughed a great hearty guffaw. "That's so, I guess I didn't want to let on I remembered ever being ill."

Leslie tried again. "I hope you won't mind if I seem a little strange at first. I'll soon learn Texas ways. And in a little while I'll be able to run the house too." She must know. It was unthinkable that she could go on like a guest in her husband's house. Better to settle things definitely and at once.

Luz had set her coffee cup down with a sharp clack. "The house runs itself, honey, with me giving it a little shove and a push now and again. I know how to handle the Mexicans, I been living with 'em all my life. They'd be squatting on their hunkers all day if I didn't keep after them. Now you just run along and enjoy yourself." She shoved back her chair with a grating sound.

Leslie stood very still in the middle of the big dining-room with the hot Gulf draught blowing through four doors. "I think I'll go up and attend to my room—I mean put away——"

She was a little girl again, uncertain, talking to her domineering mother, without the understanding and sustaining protection of her father.

Luz patted her shoulder as she trotted briskly by. "The girls'll have you all fixed up by now and prob'ly know every hook and eye on every dress."

"Then I'm going to take a walk," Leslie announced.

Luz turned at the door. "A what?"

"A nice long walk, perhaps into town and look round at things. Or perhaps round the—the garden—the—to see the place and poke into some of those quaint buildings——"

Luz came back into the room. Her round pink face looked sharp. "You can't do that."

"Why not?"

"People don't walk in Texas. Only Mexicans. If you want to ride one of the boys'll saddle you a nice gentled riding-pony."

"I'll let you know," loftily. "I'll speak to my husband about it later in the morning."

Luz laughed, a short little bark of a laugh. "Honey, if you think Bick's got nothing to do only take people round the ranch. He's been away weeks now, he's got to catch up if he's ever going to. Now, honey,

you just do some sewing or something or reading, Bick says you're a great hand to read. H'm?"

She bustled out of the room, her heels going click-clack, click-clack. Leslie felt a surge of murderous rage. She turned sharply and walked out of the room into the blazing Texas morning.

She almost ran down the dusty roadway. The young fellow who had met them at the Vientecito station was on his knees at the edge of a small lawn of tough coarse grass.

"Hello!" she said. "Hello, Dimodeo!"

The boy rose from his knees in one graceful fluid motion, he bowed low. "Señora. Buenos días, señora."

"How far is it to the village?" At the blank look on his face, "You speak English, Dimodeo. You understood me yesterday."

"Yes, señora, I speak English, certainly. . . . Village?"

"Yes. Benedict. How far is it to the town? I want to walk there."

"But you cannot walk to the town." He was genuinely shocked. He looked towards the house. "I will tell them the automobile. Or a horse. No, you are not dressed for riding. The automobile."

"No. I want to go alone and—and just look round and see things." She waved good-bye with a gaiety she did not feel, she trudged down the road in the white suède shoes.

It was fearfully hot and dusty, she saw no one, nothing moved. As she trudged along in the glaring heat she glanced at her watch and incredulously saw that it was now ten minutes past nine. Her day was just beginning but she felt she had been up for many hours. She wondered where Jordan was, she longed to see him, she looked out and out towards the endless haze of prairie and sky. He was miles and miles off somewhere with those thousands and thousands of cows.

She must have taken a wrong turning, what with the heat, the glare and her weariness, for she found herself off on a smaller rougher road lined with rows of shanties, small and tumble-down.

A thin wailing sound. From within one of the hovels an infant crying. Leslie turned and looked about her. In her resentment and bewilderment she had come farther than she knew. There was the Big House shimmering in the heat, but it seemed terribly far away. She wondered

if she should telephone and ask them to come for her. The thought of walking back under the blazing sun made her feel a little sick.

The Girls. Luz had said the Girls would be there early—for a barbecue, a great hot red barbecue. Of course there wouldn't be a telephone in any of these crazy dwellings. But perhaps someone could be sent to fetch a car. . . . She followed the sound of the wailing infant, she ascended the rickety steps and knocked at the doorway hung with strips of fly-specked paper.

"Entre!" A woman's voice.

She brushed aside the paper strips, she entered the dark close-smelling room. For a moment, blinded by the transition from glaring sun to gloom, she could see nothing. She put her hand over her smarting eyes.

"I am Mrs. Benedict," she said to no one in particular.

"Sí, sí," said a woman's voice, low and soft, with a note of weakness in it. "Perdóneme. Pardon me that I do not rise. I am ill." Now Leslie looked about her. A woman on the bed in the little front room. A girl, really, black-haired, big-bosomed, her eyes bright with fever. The girl half sat up, she even essayed a little bow as she sat there in the disordered bed. "I have a fever," she said.

"I am so sorry. Is the baby ill?"

The girl nodded sadly. "He is ill because I am ill. My milk is not good."

"Well, for heaven's sake!" Leslie said. "You just get a baby food and give him that." The girl said nothing. The child's wailing pulsed through the hot low room. Leslie went to him. He lay in a basket, very wet; dark mahogany beneath the brown skin, very angry. There was no water tap, no pump, no sink. She took off his clothes, she found some water in a pitcher, she wiped him with a damp rag, the woman, barefooted, came shakily across the sagging floor to hand her a napkin. "Go back to bed," Leslie said, and smiled at her a little ruefully. "I'm not very good at this, but it's better than having him so wet and—so wet." She put on the napkin inexpertly and he never stopped crying, looking up at her with great black swimming eyes.

She returned the child to the basket and his screams were shattering.

The woman on the bed looked up at her submissively. Leslie felt helpless and somehow rather foolish.

"What is your name?"

"Deluvina."

"What does your husband do here—what is his work?"

She wished she didn't sound like a social worker invading someone's decent privacy.

"He is Angel Obregon. He is vaquero."

So this splintered shanty was the home of one of those splendid bronze gods on horse-back.

"My husband is vaquero. My father too and my father's father are vaquero here on Reata Ranch." She said this with enormous pride.

There was the sound of a motor-car stopping outside, a horn brayed, quick steps on the broken wooden stairs.

"Miz Benedict!" called a man's voice. "Ma'am! Miss Luz says you come along home with me, they're waiting on you Madama says."

At the door stood Jett Rink.

"You ain't supposed to be in there," he said. "Bick'll be mad as all hell. And Madama's boiling mad."



CHAPTER 11

SHE SAID NOTHING, she stood there, she looked at him, he stared at her, she thought, almost insolently. He waved a hand towards the car, a new Ford, dust-coated. "We'd better get going."

She was relieved to have been sent for, she welcomed the sight of the car. But she said coolly, "Did Mr. Benedict send you here for me?"

"No. She did."

In silence she entered the car. Now she looked down at herself. Her dress was a mess. Her hair blown by the hot wind, her white shoes grey-brown. "How did you know I had gone in there?"

He spun the wheel expertly, they leaped down the road. "Everybody knows everything anybody does round here, there's a saying you can't spit without she knows it."

Leslie decided that she must speak to Jordan about this oaf. He turned his head and stared at her with a quick bold glance.

"I watched you from the garage," he said. "You ain't aiming to do much walking like that round here, are you?"

"Why not?"

"Rattlers."

"Rattlers!" she repeated. "You're trying to scare me."

"Might be. But anyway, you're too ganted to be loping round in the hot of the day, walking."

"Ganted ganted! What do you mean!" She had heard this word too often.

"Ganted. Thin."

"Whether I am thin or not is none of your business."

"Sure ain't. But like I always say, the nearer the bone the sweeter the meat."

She was deciding whether to be really angry or merely amused at this cheeky lout when they approached the Big House and she saw a dozen cars clustered in the drive. Again she looked down at herself in dismay. The Girls.

From the doorway came Luz Benedict's strident voice. "There she is

now! Where've you been getting to, Leslie? The Girls are here waiting on you." Well, there's nothing you can do about it now, so face it and don't be silly. Stained dress, dusty shoes, flushed perspiring face, straggling hair, she advanced towards them, towards the women who had been wondering and talking about her almost exclusively these past weeks.

She smiled directly into the cluster of staring women's faces, she spread her hands in a little appealing gesture.

"Forgive me. I'm late. And I'm a sight. And I did so want to make a good first impression on all of you."

The staring faces relaxed, softened. The Girls moved towards her, she advanced towards them, her hands outstretched. Luz Benedict stepped between them and took over with the strict conventionality of the provincial mind.

"Meet Joella Beezer . . . Ila Rose Motten . . . Eula Jakes . . . Miz Wirt Tanner . . . Aurie Heldebrand . . . Fernie Kling . . . Miz Ray Jennings . . . Vashti Hake . . . Adarene Morey just married a month and come all the way down from Dallas just to meet you. Girls, this is Bick's wife—Leslie. That's a boy's name hereabouts, but she's Bick's legal wife just the same."

They clustered round her, their voices were high and shrill in welcome but there was, too, a genuineness about them, an eagerness and warmth. They were expensively and formally dressed in clothes that Leslie would consider town clothes.

Of the group, two faces impressed themselves on her mind. There was Adarene Morey the Dallas bride—a plain quiet girl with intelligent understanding eyes and a queer knobby forehead and skimpy mouse-coloured hair. The other girl had come forward almost timidly—the Girls had, in fact, given her a little push towards Leslie. A very fat girl with an alarmingly red face. She bulged above her clothes, her blue eyes were fixed on Leslie with something like anguish. The young woman grasped Leslie's hand in a terrible grip, she looked deep into Leslie's eyes with a look of pain and questioning.

"And your name—forgive me—I want to be sure I have you all clear. . . ." Leslie said.

"I'm Vashti Hake—your nearest neighbour—our place meets Bick's—yours—"

So this was the girl whom Bick had been expected to marry—this trembling mound of hurt pride and emotion. "I hope we're going to be friends as well as neighbours." What a speech, Leslie! her inner voice said. Being mistress of the manor, are you?

Luz Benedict spoke. "It's time to start. Come on."

"But Luz, I've got to change my clothes. I look simply terrible."

"We haven't got time," Luz said firmly.

Serenely Leslie moved towards the stairway. "You girls look so fresh and crisp. I can't go like this. I'd disgrace you." Ruefully she glanced down at herself. "I'll only be a minute. Does anyone want to come up to keep me company?"

In one concerted movement they surged up the stairs.

"Could we see your things? Could we?"

"Of course. But I didn't get much. Jordan and I were married in such a hurry."

The procession slowed, the heads turned as though moved on a single pivot to stare at Vashti Hake. The red anguished face became a rich purple. Equably Leslie went on, "Maybe my clothes aren't right for Texas. You've all got to tell me the right thing to do and the right thing to wear. Will you?" And she looked at Vashti Hake and she looked at Adarene Morey and she thought, Well, they will, at least. And impartially she smiled at all the rest.

She changed from the stained blue dress to a cream silk with a border of two shades of green. The skirt came to her knees, the neckline was known as the bateau, the whole as a sports costume. It was high fashion and over it the representatives of Dallas, Fort Worth, Hermoso, Vientecito, Corpus Christi, Kingsville, Houston and Benedict cooed and ohed and ahed. They rummaged clothes cupboards and held fragile garments up against their own ampler bosoms. Leslie adjusted the cloche hat of green grosgrain ribbon. From her new white buckskin shoes to her brushed and shining hair she was immaculate again and eager for the day ahead. She faced the Girls, smiling and friendly. "It was dear of you to wait while I changed."

They were off now in a haze of dust, a clatter of talk, a procession of cars down the long road, then across the prairie itself, into gullies, down rutted lanes, through sandy loam, the mesquite branches switching and clawing the cars as they lurched past.

Sociably she turned to the girl seated next her. Eula, they called her. "Do you live near here?"

"Eighty miles?" said Eula, and her voice took the rising inflection, as though asking a question rather than answering it.

"And you came all that way? What's the name of your town?"

"Forraje?" Eula ventured again tentatively, as though she would be the first to retract the name if her hearer did not approve.

Leslie began to speculate about the high shrill feminine voices, about the tentativeness, about the vague air of insecurity that touched these women.

Quietly, she listened to the talk. Horses, children, clothes, cooking, barbecues, bridge, coffee parties. Well, what's wrong with that, she demanded of herself.

Miraculously, as though divining her thoughts, Adarene Morey said, very low, beneath the crackle of high voices, "That's the way it is. You'll never hear a word of talk about books or music or sculpture or painting in Texas."

"But why?"

Adarene shrugged, helplessly. "I honestly don't know. Maybe it's the climate. Or the distances. Or the money. Or something. They never speak of these things. They have a kind of contempt for them."

"What about you?"

"Oh, I'm considered odd. But it's all right because the Moreys are old Texas cotton."

"What are you two buzzing about, looking so sneaky?" bawled Ila Rose Motten.

And now a long low cluster of buildings squatted against the horizon. "There we are," said Adarene Morey, and turned to smile at Leslie. "That's headquarters bunk-house, in case you don't know. I guess you aren't really acquainted yet, are you? Reata's so big, even for Texas."

Presently they drew up in the bare dusty space surrounding the bunk-

house. The sun glared upon a group standing near the long wooden table. There was Jordan, not only in the boots and spurs and leather waistcoat and Stetson, but in fringed leather trousers like a movie hero. As this leather god came towards her Leslie found herself running towards him, she had no other single thought in her mind but to be near him again.

He led her forward. "Boys, this is my wife Leslie. Leslie, Lucius Morey down from Dallas—you met Adarene. . . . Bale Clinch you want to watch out for him he's running for Sheriff. . . . Ollie Whiteside . . . smartest lawyer around. Keeps us out of jail. . . . Pinky Snyth from the Hakes' place—say, Vashti, I hear your pa's ill and couldn't come."

Vashti Hake looked at Jordan Benedict without replying. The plump rosy face flushed deeper, then paled ominously. Deliberately, and with a kind of awful dignity, this fat girl walked to the side of Pinky Snyth the little cow-hand, so diminutive beside her. She took his hand in hers and as she spoke she abandoned the patois of the Texan.

"Pa isn't ill. He's sulking. But he'll get over it. There's more than one bride and bridegroom here at this barbecue. Mott Snyth and I were married yesterday in Hermoso."

A final glare at Jordan Benedict, a look that was a tragic mixture of wounded pride and pitiful defeat. The triumphant bride burst into tears, bent to bury her face in the bridegroom's inadequate shoulder.

A hubbub of cries and squeals, of guffaws and back-slappings, of congratulations uttered too loudly and disapproval muttered *sotto voce*.

Vashti Hake had made her point, attention was centred on her now, Bick had kissed the bride's wet cheek and wrung the little man's surprisingly steel-strong hand. Together, happily unnoticed he and Leslie were free to move about unhampered. Only Luz Benedict bustled up to them as they turned away from the shrill group. She glared at Leslie, she jerked her gaze towards Bick.

"You're the cause of this!"

"Fine," said Bick equably and patted Luz's shoulder. "Vashti should have been married five years ago."

Leslie tucked her arm through Bick's. "Show me the bunk-house. I've read about them all my life."

He pressed her arm close. "Nothing much to see." Cots, each covered with a thin grey-brown blanket. A bit of mirror stuck on the wall and men's belongings ranged on shelves—a razor, a broken-toothed comb, a battered clock. A guitar on an upended wooden box.

At the look on her face Bick laughed indulgently. "What did you expect to see?"

"Pistols. Poker chips. Silk garters. Silver spurs."

"Serves you right for reading so much. Our boys aren't allowed to carry guns unless they're out on the range, or hunting."

She threw a final look over her shoulder at the bare, hot gritty little room. "Another girlish dream gone. Tell me, darling, how much are they paid, your vaqueros?"

"Oh, twenty a month—some of them thirty. The top hands. Plus mounts and found, of course."

She stared in unbelief, she started to protest, thought better of it, was silent. It was high noon now; as they came again into the clearing the heat struck like a blow. She detained him, her hand on his arm.

"Jordan, was it pique? I mean did that poor girl marry that little man because of you—and me?"

"I suppose so. But it had to be somebody. Think no more of it. The barbecue's about cooked, I guess."

As they walked towards the others she saw that the company had separated into two groups, male and female. The Girls were clustered near the table talking all together. The men stood apart, bunched, low-voiced. Her arm through Bick's, she strolled with him towards the men's group. He disengaged his arm. "The girls are over there."

One of the women called to the grouped men, petulantly. "Now you boys come over and talk to us, I bet you're telling Pinky stories and they ain't fit to hear and we'd like to hear them. You come on, now, or we'll be real mad!" May-ud.

And when the men replied, speaking to the women, it seemed to Leslie that they changed their tone, it was as adults change when they speak to little children, coming down to their mental level.

Now the preparations for the meal were accelerated and she came forward interestedly to see and to learn.

In the centre of the cleared circle, its perimeter neatly swept, was a red-hot bed of live wood coals on the ground. This was no ordinary picnic bonfire, this was a hard-shaped mound that must surely have been going for many hours.

Old Eusebio, the cook, squatting on his haunches before the fierce heat of the fire, was manipulating four cooking vessels at once. First, of course, there was the five-gallon pot of steaming coffee. Nearby, on a crude tripod, was the vast skillet of beans. As Leslie watched, fascinated, Eusebio lifted the top off a still larger skillet and gave a stir to the mass of rice and tomato bubbling round chunks of beef.

Adarene Morey pointed to the pit nearby about which three vaqueros were stooping. They were lifting something out of the hole in the ground and a delicious steam permeated the air. "They're taking out the barbecue. Here, have a piece of this. Have you ever eaten Mexican bread, it's delicious." They were all nibbling wedges of something crisp and stiff.

On the table were stacked discs a foot in circumference and thin-edged. Adarene broke off a generous wedge from one of them and Leslie munched it and found it rather flat-tasting and said it was delicious.

Two vaqueros were carrying a large sack, dark, wet, and steaming, that they had taken from the hole in the ground. This outer sack they deftly slit with sharp bright knives. Beneath it was another cloth, lighter and stained with juices. Still thus encased, the burden was carried to the table and placed on a great flat wooden board. The guests were crowded all round the table now, and in each hand was a wedge of the crisp thin bread. The feast dish. Cloths that covered it were unrolled carefully, there floated from the juice-stained mound a mouth-watering aroma of rich roast meat.

The final layer of wrapping was removed. A little Vesuvius of steam wafted upward on the hot noonday air. There on the table was the mammoth head of an animal. It was the head complete. The hide-hair and the outer skin had been removed, but all the parts remained, the eyes sunken somewhat in the sockets but still staring blindly out at the admiring world. The tongue lolled out of the open mouth and the teeth grinned at the Texans who were smiling down in anticipation. Collops



of roast meat hung from cheeks and jowls. Curiously enough they stood as they ate. Deftly Eusebio jerked the tongue out, he sliced off the crown of the head, someone began to peel the smoking tongue and to cut it neatly on the wooden board. The hot spicy titbits were placed on the pieces of thin crisp bread held out so eagerly and there arose little cries of gustatory pleasure.

"Here," Vashti said, and hospitably extended to Leslie a moist slice on a wedge of bread. "If you don't say this is about the best barbecue you ever ate."

Bick was regarding her with some anxiety and, she thought, a shade disapprovingly. Through her mind, as she smiled and accepted the food held out to her, went an argument founded on clear reasoning against instinct. You're being silly and narrow-minded. You've eaten cold sliced tongue, where did you think it came from—did you think it was born on a silver platter bordered with sprigs of watercress? After all, perhaps Texans wouldn't like the idea of lobsters and oysters and crabs, they're not very attractive either when they come up from the baking pit, with all those claws and tails and whiskers.

Bick was talking, he was explaining something to her. His low charming voice flowed over her soothingly. "This is the real Spanish-Mexican barbacoa. That's where we get the word."

"How fascinating," Leslie managed to murmur. "Barbacoa."

"You see, we take a fresh calf's head and skin it and place it in a deep pit dug in the ground on a bed of hot mesquite coals. We wrap the head in clean white cloths and then tightly in canvas and down it goes the night before, and it cooks down there for eighteen hours. . . ."

Now spoons were being used. With glad cries the Girls were dipping into the top of the head and removing spoonfuls of the soft brains and placing them on fresh pieces of bread with a bit of salt sprinkled on top. Leslie turned away, she felt she was going to be very sick, she steeled herself, she turned back, she smiled, she felt a little cold dew on her upper lip and the lip itself was strangely stiff.

"Eat while it's hot!" Miz Wirt Tanner urged her: "They's plenty more."

"I'm not very hungry, really," she replied. "Perhaps if I just had a little

of the rice and some coffee. I'm not accustomed to the—the—heat—yet."

"My gosh, this ain't hot. Wait till July!"

Someone asked her a question, she turned her face up to the questioner, she arranged a reply of sorts in her mind, but it was never uttered. At that moment the bunk-house tipped towards her, the sky rolled with it and the ground rose up in front of her and rapped her smartly on the head.

For the first time in her healthy twenty-odd years Leslie Lynnton had fainted dead away.

CHAPTER 12

VERY WHITE she lay in the big bare bedroom at Reata and Bick had sent for Doctor Tom Walker at Vientecito. When he came in Leslie knew it was all right. He was a small slight man, his suit his shoes his hat were the clothes she had been accustomed to see worn by middle-aged men in Virginia's hot weather—by her father. He stood there, dabbing his forehead a little with a white handkerchief.

"How nice," said Leslie to her own astonishment. She had not in the least meant to say it, it had blurted itself out.

"I shall never get used to this damned heat," Doctor Walker said. "How are you, Bick? I heard you'd married. High time."

He came to the bedside, relaxed and easy, and picked up her hand as it lay there so inert on the coverlet. His fingers were cool and steady on her wrist. The routine. The chest, the lungs, the back, the stomach, the heart, the belly.

"She'll be all right I think," he said turning to Bick Benedict standing so tensely at the bedside. "I'd say a temporary fatigue and a sort of—have you had a shock?"

"No."

"She's been fine," Bick said. "She's been wonderful until just today."

Doctor Walker took out his pad and fountain pen, he began to write a prescription in a neat hand.

"What about it, Tom?" Bick asked. "What made her faint and stay like that so long? I guess I went kind of crazy I was so scared."

Doctor Tom Walker stood up and he had the air of one who has made a decision. "Fainting is a way of shutting out of your consciousness something you find repellent. In the old days ladies used to do it quite a bit. It was a kind of weapon. They don't use it so much nowadays because they're more free to rebel against what they don't like. This young lady doesn't look like the fainting kind to me."

Bick brushed this aside with some impatience. "Yes. Sure. But what do you advise now?"

Tom Walker seemed to ponder this a moment. "Well, Bick, if I were married to this girl I guess I'd spend the rest of my life cherishing her—no, I'll give you the advice of a man of medicine, not a romantic. You see, all this is new to Mrs. Benedict."

"Leslie," she murmured rather drowsily from the bed. She was feeling strangely relaxed, suddenly, and lighthearted and understood.

"New to Leslie. Beginning marriage is an adjustment under the simplest of circumstances. But when you have to adjust to marriage and Texas at the same time! Well, that's quite a feat." He turned to Leslie. "Tell me, if you could do whatever you liked here what would you want to do?"

She sat up vigorously and pushed her hair back from her forehead. Her face was sparkling, animated. She raised her eyes to the window and the brazen sky, she glanced at Doctor Tom Walker and then her eyes came to rest in Jordan Benedict's eyes.

"I want to go into the kitchen and cook two chickens—pan-roast them—a quick broil first to brown and then a slow oven. Delicious. In butter and a strip or two of bacon for flavour. I want to whip up a meringue. With strawberries on top. . . . I want to go to Benedict and walk in the town and look in the shop windows and I want to see the side streets where people live. . . . I want to have the piano tuned. . . . I want to see the Alamo at San Antonio. . . . I want to learn to speak Spanish. . . . But most of all I want to go with you, Jordan—I want that more than anything—to go with you and see what you do. . . . And I'd like to talk—I mean good talk with all kinds of people at dinner and after dinner . . . and books . . . and flowers in the house. . . ."

Bick's brow was furrowed. "Look, Leslie honey. You'll do all these

things in time. But why not just relax for a while and take things as they are? Don't you think so, Doc?"

The slight figure in the rumpled linen suit stood looking down at the two seated on the bed, hand in hand and miles apart. Slowly he tore into small scraps the prescription he had so recently written. "I think Leslie's prescription is better than this one. I'd advise you to try it. . . . Well, I'll be getting along." He stooped for his bag. Then, without glancing over his shoulder he said, "Come on in, Miss Luz. The diagnosis has been made, there's nothing wrong. Just a rush of ambition to the ego."

And there was Luz Benedict, not at all embarrassed at being caught. Doctor Tom looked at her, he quirked one eyebrow. "You weren't eavesdropping, were you, Madama?"

"There's no call to get personal, Tom Walker. I've got a right to know in my own house——" Her voice was high and shrill. "I should think anybody'd be glad to have all the responsibility of the house taken off them." She was apparently addressing Doctor Tom Walker but her eyes were on Leslie. "She ain't real strong, you can see that. And look at what happened at the barbecue, just toppling over like a person dropped dead." This last with a certain relish. "Poor delicate child, so ganted."

Leslie flung the bedclothes aside and swung her long legs in a decorous arc so that in one swooping movement she had got out of bed, was standing in her nightgown, had thrust her arms into her dressing-gown and was wrapping it about her with the air of one who buckles on a coat of mail.

"Luz Benedict," she said, very distinctly, "I'm not going to behave like the crushed little bride in a Victorian novel. I don't want to take your place, but I won't have you take mine, either. I know I can't take over this huge house twenty-four hours after I've come into it. I don't want to, yet. But I won't be a guest in my husband's house."

Bick came to Leslie, he held her to him. "Leslie honey, you're tired and upset and you don't seem awfully strong——"

"Look here. Listen a minute." Tom Walker had an edge to his speech now, very unlike the soft casual tone of a few minutes earlier. "What

are you trying to do—break her down? Let me tell you something. This girl is as wiry as a steel spring and as indestructible. She's sound and strong and she'll bounce back when you two big high-blood-pressured people are wondering why you feel so tired after eating all that beef. You let her do as she rightly pleases." He made for the door, one hand held high in farewell. "Call me if you need me, any hour of the day or night." He was gone. Bick followed him downstairs.

The two women in the bedroom looked at each other. "That's all right," Luz said meaninglessly. Her usual high colour was drained away now and Leslie found herself startled by this aspect, there seemed something sinister in the new white face.

Leslie said, "Let's have everything clear and open, Luz, and then there won't be those dreadful hidings and listenings and little insinuations. I'm sorry if that sounds rude. I'm just trying to be honest."

"That's all right," Luz said again.

"I'm going to dress now. I feel just fine. It must be nearly dinner-time. I'm going down to see what there is in that great enormous ice-chest." At the look in Luz's face, "I think I'll go down straight away, in my dressing-gown, and settle it. No steak."

CHAPTER 13

Bick had said that night, "How about riding out with me after breakfast? Horses, I mean." Then, at her look of pure joy, "Yes, I know. But I start before daylight and it's a far piece down there. Dusty and noisy and hotter than today. Round-up."

"Round-up!" She repeated the word as though he had said Venice—lagoons—gondolas—music—love in the moonlight.

"We'll eat from the supply wagon. Rosendo's a good cook, I've ordered a special—no, I won't tell you. Jett'll drive you home when it gets too hot, I don't want you to ride back in the sun. He'll call for you with the car."

"Oh, Jordan, it sounds heavenly!"

"It isn't like the movies. Don't expect romance. What you'll see is rough."

Luz did not see them off next morning. As they rode away Leslie found herself going over in her mind anything she might have left in her room in the way of letters, notes, memoranda. Then she was ashamed of having allowed this suspicion to enter her mind.

It was hard riding, she was unaccustomed to this broad Western saddle, the mesquite was a hazard, their talk was disjointed. Leslie felt free and gay and new. To ride again was exhilarating after days of trains and hotels and motor-cars.

She was to see the purpose of these millions of acres, she was to be part of the everyday work of Reata Ranch.

They rode side by side. "Have to be careful of gopher holes here. Your horse steps into one of those he can throw you—or he can break a leg."

"Can't I wait for you so that we can ride back together when you're finished?"

"No, it'll be too hot then. And no telling when I'll have finished. You'll see why after you've sat out in the sun for a few hours. Yesterday they nooned at the creek but today there'll be no shade. Jett will drive you home after lunch."

"Tell me about this Jett Rink."

"Jett's all right when he behaves himself. When he drinks he goes kind of crazy. I've fired him a dozen times but he always seems to turn up back at the ranch, one way or another. He's a kind of genius, Jett is."

"He is! Why, he just seemed to me a sullen loutish kind of boy. And sort of savage, too. I don't know. What do you mean, genius?"

"Oh, lots of ways. Machinery. Mechanics. There's nothing he can't mend, nothing he can't run that has an engine in it. He's a wizard—when he's sober. But drunk or sober he shouldn't be on a ranch because you can't trust him with animals."

"How do you mean—trust him?"

"He's naturally mean with them. He abuses them. Kicks horses. Hits them over the head——"

"But why?"

"He's got a grudge against the world."

"He sounds irresponsible and sadistic," she said.

"He'll probably end up a billionaire—or in the electric-chair," Bick predicted.

In silence they rode for a moment. Only the creak of leather, the faint jingle of metal. Horses' hoofs on sun-baked earth. Texas sounds.

"Leslie, since we came home I've been up to my ears in work. Maybe you've felt left out of things. Look, it's like this. You know I run Reata for the family. I'm pulling one way—I think it's the right way—and Luz and Maudie and Bowie and Roady and the rest of the family they're all pulling another. They want the money—all the money they can get out of the ranch. And I want to put money back into the ranch. I want to raise and breed the best beef cattle in the world, I want to experiment with new breeds and new grasses, I'm interested in the same sort of thing that Kleberg's interested in on the big King ranch. The only one of the family who's with me is Uncle Bawley, he runs the Holgado Division. Say, I've an idea you'll be crazy about old Uncle Bawley. He's a character. Nearly seventy but full of beans. We'll have to take a trip out there, you'll love it. It's high country, the mountains——"

"Mountains! In Texas!"

"Sure mountains. There's everything in Texas. Mountains and forest and rivers and desert and plains and valleys and heat and cold."

"I know. You're in love with it."

He reined his horse, he looked at her, his eyes full of pain. "Maybe it's going to be hell for you down here. Maybe I shouldn't have brought you to Texas."

"It's a little late now. We're in it, darling."

"Leslie, can you understand this? Reata takes all my time. It always will. You'll be a neglected wife. Everything's against you—climate—people—family—customs. I know." He looked at her, his eyes agonized, pleading. "I love you. I love you."

The two horses stood close, side by side, leather creaking on leather. They stood like good Texas cow horses while the man and woman strained towards each other there in the saddles, his knee against hers, his thigh against hers, his lips on hers there in the brilliant wild endless Texas plain.

She looked at him as they drew apart slowly. At no time in her life,

before or after this moment, was Leslie Lynnton so nearly beautiful.

"It's going to be wonderful," she said finally, "and terrible. I suppose we're in for a stormy future. I'm going to try to change you and you're going to be impatient when I don't melt into all this." She swept the vastness with her arm.

"I'll try not to be."

"Whoever said love conquers all was a fool. Because almost everything conquers love—or tries to."

The sun was up, full blast. Already it was growing hot. Bick gathered up his reins. "Yippee!" he yelled like a character in a Western movie. Without another word they streaked across the prairie mile on mile, they galloped into Number Two Camp to find it a welter of dust, thudding hoofs, colour, bellowing, clamour.

"Stay here. Just here. This is Tomaso. He'll take care of you. If you get tired you can sit on top of the high fence there. You may be better there anyway. I'll be back. Here, take this. You'll need it. Across your face."

He tossed her his handkerchief and was off into the mêlée, a figure of steel and iron and muscle.

Cattle. So close-packed that it seemed you could walk on their backs for a mile—for miles as far as the eye could see. From the little sand hills, from the mesquite mottes and the cactus came the living streams, a river here a river there, a river of moving flesh wherever the eye rested, and these sluggish lines were added to the great central pool until it became a Mississippi of cattle fed by its smaller tributaries. Leslie took the big handkerchief that Jordan had tossed to her, she tied it so that her nose and mouth were covered, a Moslem woman in riding-clothes. The men on horseback, the men running about on foot were ghostly figures in a fog of dust. Their faces were stern and intent, the riders seemed not riders at all but centaurs part horse part man, swaying with the animals as though they were one body.

They rode headlong into the herd, they seemed not even to touch the reins, they swung slightly in the saddles as the horses wove in and out like fluid things. You saw how this weaving movement of man and horse separated the bawling calf from its mother, the high plaintive blating

becoming more anguished as the animal sought frantically to return to the seething mass. Wide-eyed, breathless, Leslie watched this ancient process, unchanged for centuries. These men leaped off their horses, threw the struggling calf and roped him, were on the horses again in a swift single leap and off into the surging herd. As they rode you heard them calling softly, tenderly, quieting the milling frantic sea of cattle. Woo woo woo vaca! Woo woo woo novillo. Woo vaca. Woo woo woo! Like a mother humming to her restless child.

To Leslie it was a legendary scene, incredibly remote from the world she had always known. A welter of noise, confusion; the stench of singeing hair and burned flesh. Perched on the corral fence with Tomaso as bodyguard, her heels hooked on a lower rail, she began slowly to comprehend that in this gigantic *mêlée* of rounding-up, separating, branding, castrating there was order; and in that order exquisite timing and actually a kind of art. Here was a craft that had in it comedy and tragedy; that had endured for centuries and changed but little.

She saw Bick Benedict—her own husband Jordan Benedict, she told herself with mixed feelings of pride and resentment as she watched him—working in the inferno of heaving flesh and choking dust and noise and movement and daring and danger and brutal beauty.

A ballet, she said to herself. A violent beautiful ballet of America.

Up clattered Bick, his teeth gleaming startlingly white in his dust-grimed scarlet face.

"All right, honey?"

"Fine. I want to ask questions."

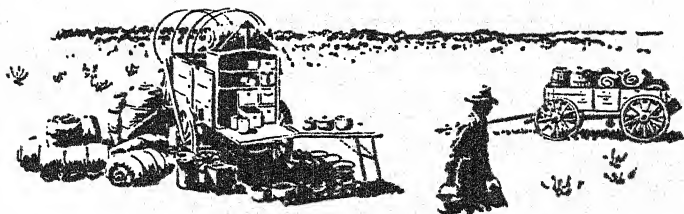
"I was afraid of that." He pulled his horse up beside her at the fence.

"Tell me, that's Polo, isn't it, who was so splendid and dressy to welcome us."

"Yes. Polo's caporal. Foreman."

"What's he doing? He and the others. It looks cruel."

"Not if America wants to eat. They're roping. And branding. Only the foreman and the bosses and the best of the ropers do that. The others—the men who are throwing the calves—they're called tumbadores. It's a great trick, throwing a calf, there's less in it than meets the eye, really. It looks like a feat of strength but they're not really lifting those calves.



You squeeze the calf's ear, it jumps, you pull him sideways and he falls flat on his right side with his left side up, ready for branding. Over there's the branding fire. It's tricky work. Those irons are red-hot. It's the Reata brand, of course. If they press too hard the calves get a burn sore. If they don't press hard enough the brand won't be clear. They're dehorning too, those other fellows."

"It seems horrible but perhaps it isn't. What are those boys doing? The ones with the sticks and the buckets?"

"They're atoleros. Atole—well, mush. They've got a kind of lime paste in those buckets, they have rags wrapped round those sticks and they smear the lime on the fresh burns to heal them. . . . Well, you wanted to come."

"Don't you worry about me. I'm tougher than I was yesterday. I'm a tough Texan. Go on."

He grinned. "Well, brace yourself. You won't like what comes next."

"The one who's doing something to their ears and——"

"And castrating the male calves. He's the capador. He castrates the males and that makes them steers. And he nicks a piece off the end of the left ear of male and female and sticks it in his pocket, and he marks the right ear with a hole and a slit, for identification. At the end of the day he adds up, and the number of pieces of ear in his pocket shows the number of calves we've branded."

"Jordan Benedict, I'll never eat roast beef again as long as I live."

"Oh, yes you will."

On their way to the dinner camp they passed the branding fire of hot embers.

At Bick's call a little lad about ten years old came running to their

horses, he came shyly, a handsome boy with very blue eyes bluer in contrast with the sun-browned face.

"Hello, Bobby!"

"Howdy, Mr. Bick."

"Where's your father?"

"He went back there in the gully, he says there's a bunch there the boys missed."

"Does, eh?" Bick looked at Leslie. "This kid comes of good stuff. His father is Dietz, ranch boss on Number One. He'll make a wonderful hand when he grows up. What are you going to be when you get to be a man, Bobby? A cowboy?"

"I'm going to be a Ranger, and shoot people."

"Not me!"

"No. Bad people."

"Bobby, this is Mrs. Benedict. This is the new señora."

The deep blue eyes were turned on her like searchlights. "What she wearing them funny clothes for?"

Bick grinned. "She hasn't had time to get some Texas clothes."

And away they cantered from the little boy, but not so far after all, they were to discover twenty-five years later.

Leslie found herself eating Rosendo's food with relish. Having polished off chicken, French beans, apple pie and half a disc of skillet bread she inspected the supply wagon with its orderly compartments for spices, flour, beans, rice, cutlery, tin-ware. She complimented the gifted Rosendo and was enchanted with the benign and wrinkled face beneath the vast straw sombrero. She felt well and buoyant of spirit.

"Dearest, do you work like this every day?"

"Well—no. No, I don't."

"I mean it's wonderful that you can do it, but it's ghastly rough and tough."

He actually blushed a little then beneath the russet burn, and he laughed rather sheepishly, like a boy. "Tell you the truth, honey, I was just showing off today in front of my girl. Like a kid shinning up the apple tree."

The men were mounting their horses, fresh horses she saw, from a

great cluster of them she had not noticed until now, grazing against the horizon.

"New horses? Are they going to start all over again?"

"Sure, new horses. Or fresh, we'd say. Every Benedict vaquero has got at least ten horses. They've been changing all the time, you just haven't noticed. They'll be riding about five different horses each, today. See that bunch of horses over there? They're what we call cutting horses. They're used to cut out certain animals from the herd. Trained for it. You don't even have to touch the reins half the time. Just sway your body and your horse will turn with your weight this way or that."

"Jordan! I forgot all about My Mistake. These two or three days have been so new and strange—different, I mean. Is she here?"

"She's out in pasture. Very queenly, with a canvas shade on poles in one corner if she finds Texas too hot. A six-mile pasture, if you want to know. One of the boys has been exercising her a little every day to keep her in shape after the long trip down. I meant to tell you. Obregon there—over there, that tall fellow in the straw hat—had her out yesterday he says she's the finest little——"

"Oh, let me talk to him, will you? I'm homesick for her."

Summoned, the man came towards them. He was noticeably taller than the average and very slim.

"Angel," Bick said as the man came towards them. "Angel Obregon."

"That's the husband of the woman with the baby! Tell him I know his wife. Yesterday—but then you don't know about it."

Bick spoke to the man. "The little filly you exercised yesterday," he said in Spanish, "is a great favourite of the señora. The horse is her own. She has great feeling for the horse."

The man's face flashed into sudden radiance, he began to speak, the words rolling out with a great drumming of Spanish r's. "He says she is a miracle of a horse, that she is swifter than any horse in Texas but she is not happy, he says perhaps she longs for her home."

A little involuntary cry came from Leslie. "Oh, Jordan, I must see her. She's homesick for Virginia. I want to put my arms round her neck and comfort her."

"Yes," said Bick stiffly. Obregon was speaking again, his hat was in

his hand, he was speaking directly to Leslie in a flood of Spanish, the dark eyes glowing down upon her.

Helplessly she smiled up at the ardent face.

Bick stood up. "He is thanking you for being so kind to his wife yesterday. He says you have worked a miracle, his wife is much improved, his infant son—say what is all this, anyway! I can't have you messing about with——"

But she sprang up, impulsively she laid her hand on the man's arm. "Oh, I'm so glad. Tell her I'll be in to see her again, I'll bring her something for the baby."

"The hell you will! . . . That is all, Obregon. To work now." The man turned away, mounted his horse for the afternoon's work with the others.

A dot had been scurrying like an insect across the prairie. Now it came closer, it spun round in a spiral of dust, it stopped with a yip and a grinding of brakes. The calves ran bleating and scattering. The cattle leaped in terror, the horses reared, the vaqueros muttered imprecations.

"Damn that lout!" Bick said. "If he ever runs down one of those calves I'll beat him up myself."

Jett Rink leaped out and yelled to the world in general, "You et?"

"Sí."

"I ain't."

He heaped a plate with beans stew rice bread and squatting on his haunches he ate the boiling-hot mess in the boiling-hot sun.

"You're late," Bick said.

"It ain't me. I had to catch that horse for Madama."

"What horse?"

"That new one. My Mistake. She wanted to ride her."

"She can't," Leslie cried, and there was outrage in her voice. "She can't! My Mistake's a race-horse."

"She's riding her," Jett said coolly, and heaped his plate again with the steaming stew. "She sure hated to put on the Western saddle, that little filly did. Took two of us to get it on her. But Madama, she could ride a bat outa hell."

A trifle worriedly Bick said, "It's all right, Leslie. Luz can ride any

four-legged thing." Abruptly he turned to Rink. "Eat your dinner and get going. I want Mrs. Benedict out of this heat."

Jett burst into laughter. "You know what else she done? She rigged herself out in a old hoop skirt she got out of the attic, she said her gram-maw could ride and rope in a hoop skirt and she's got herself rigged out in that outfit, rope and all, and she's riding hell-bent this way, last I saw of her."

Bick took off his hat and ran his hand over his hot wet forehead. His eyes searched the endless plain.

"Jordan, I want to stay. I want to wait till she comes. My Mistake isn't used to this terrible—to the sun and the brush and that heavy Western saddle. I want to see if she's all right."

Almost harshly he said, "You'll go along with Jett. I'll tend to Luz. Alone. I'll have Angel ride My Mistake home." Quietly Leslie said, "All right, Jordan." She came close to him, she saw the sharp white ridge of the jaw muscle beneath the sunburned skin. The blue eyes were flint-grey.

CHAPTER 14

ALMOST GRATEFULLY she had sunk into the hot dusty front seat of the car. "I want to sit in the front," she said to Bick, "so that I can see everything on the way home."

Bick on his horse at the side of the car had leaned over and touched her hand. "We'll make a real Texian of you yet, honey. At that, I don't know any Texas woman who could take the heat and rumpus better than you did. Unless it's Luz." He leaned far off his horse so that he was standing in one stirrup, his left hand on her shoulder, and kissed her hard on the mouth. Instinctively she sensed or saw out of the corner of her eye that Jett Rink's foot moved to press the accelerator, then stopped, poised. She knew that he had suppressed a sudden murderous impulse to start the car with a swift leap while Jordan hung perilously half on the horse, half in the car.

Bick straightened, he turned in his saddle to look back at her as he rode away, his hand held high in farewell. He looked handsome and

vital. Suddenly Jett pressed the accélerator hard and caught up with him.

"Look, Bick, can I take her round by the other way, the long back road? If she wants to see things, different things."

Reluctantly he said, "Well, all right. But you, Jett, don't you get any big touring notions in that empty sheepherder's head of yours." They stared hard at each other. It was, Leslie thought, as though they hated one another and yet there was a kind of understanding—almost a bond—between them.

Now they shot off at terrific speed over the vast bare terrain.

"Where is the road—the highway?" she asked. "You said you were taking the long road back."

"This here is it."

"But this is just a little wider than the one we took this morning with the horses. It isn't really a public road, is it?"

"No road. No road like that. I guess you don't know how big this outfit is. The roads round Reata are Reata. Anybody tries to cut across here that don't belong, why, they turn up missing. Anybody wants to drive from here to yonder, why they damn well got to go about a hundred miles out of their way to get there."

"Who says they must?"

"Bick Benedict, that's who says."

She decided not to pursue the subject with this strangely angry young man. His eyes were actually bulging a little and his mouth muscles were drawn back in a snarl. She began to regret the drive, she decided to ask no questions of this boor, since every utterance seemed to send him into a rage. They went along in silence, their speed now was frightening.

He began to speak, he spat out the words. "How'd they come by it! Millions of acres. Who gets hold of millions of acres without they took it off somebody!"

Here at last was Leslie's chance to make use of that knowledge gained from books of South-west lore over which she had so eagerly pored. She darted about in her mind for remembered facts, statistics.

"In those days Spanish land grants could be bought by anyone who had the money. It was just like a deal in landed property. The settlers bought it from——"

"Bought it—hell! Took it off a ignorant bunch of Mexicans didn't have the brains or guts to hang on to it. Lawyers come in and schemed and lawsuits lasted a hundred years and by the time they got through the Americans had the land and the greasers was out on their ears. Look, some day I'm going to have more money than any Benedict ever laid hands on. Everybody in Texas is going to hear about me. I ain't sitting here sleeping with my eyes open. I'm going to be a millionaire and I ain't kidding. I'm going to have a million dollars. I'm going to have a billion. I'm going to have a zillion."

"You're not exactly loyal to your employer, are you, Jett?" She saw his head turn on that thick pugnacious neck as he stared at her. She went on conversationally, a polite half-smile of interest on her lips. "You talk so interestingly about other people's background. Tell me a little about your own, will you? Your childhood and your father and mother. Unless you'd rather not."

"Why shouldn't I!" he yelled belligerently. "They was here in Texas enough years ago to be rich, too, only they wasn't foxy. It sure tells good. Ma, she's been dead since I was about two years old, I don't remember her even, they was seven of us kids, I don't know where they're at, most of 'em. Pa, he went in one day round here with his gun to get some birds for us kids to eat, I guess. Strictly not allowed. Private, those birds, and the air they fly in is private. He never come out."

"Maybe he went away. Sometimes people do that—they don't mean to but the responsibility is too much for them, their minds just——"

Now he turned squarely to look at her, his laugh was a short sharp yelp. "You sure got a lot to learn about Texas."

"I want to learn. I want to know about you and all the others on Reata."

"Yeh, well, we're all doing great. Me and all the others and the Mexicans specially. If they don't like it they can go back to Mexico and starve. I'm real petted. Bick, he give me a few acres out Viento way. Real lovely. You couldn't feed a three-legged calf off it."

"Jett, I find I'm more tired than I thought. I'd like to go straight home." They tore along the landscape, it seemed to Leslie that movement was reversed in some nightmarish way and that it was the car

that stood still, the flat glaring plain that whirled past them like a monotonous changless cyclorama.

They entered a down-at-heel little town, they had flashed past a broken road sign that said NOPAL.

"What's this?" Leslie asked.

"It's the other side of Benedict only they call it Nopal like it's another town. It's like real Mexico, I don't guess there's two white people living there."

"White. You mean—but the Mexicans aren't—"

"They sure ain't white, for my money. Two Americans then. Maybe you like that better."

"Jordan told me—my husband told me that some of the Mexicans had been there—their families, I mean—hundreds of years. They were here long before you, or the Benedicts, or Reata, or anything that's here now. They belong here. They're more American than you are!"

"Damn it to hell!" he yelled. "You—if you were a man I'd kill you for that." His foot jammed down hard on the floorboard, they were tearing crazily along the ribbon of road.

We are going to be killed, she thought. She began to laugh a little hysterically. Then she stopped abruptly and sat silent a moment, her hands covering her eyes. When she brought her hands down they were fists. She was conquering an almost overwhelming impulse to hit hard that heavy-jowled young face with the hard blue eyes set so close together. Jett slowed down abruptly.

"Ain't you feeling good, ma'am? You like a drink or something, Miz Benedict?"

Furious, she said, "You drove like a maniac. If my husband knew you drove like that! You're out of your senses!"

Jett Rink was saying something. She hadn't quite heard. He seemed now to be driving very slowly, for him. "What? What did you say?"

The knuckles of his hands on the wheel showed white. "I says—" He cleared his throat. "—I says I never seen a girl—a woman—like you before. You sure are different. You ain't afraid of nothing. I've seen a lot of women, but I never seen anybody like you, that's for sure."

They were nearing the gates now. She'd never need to be with him

again. "Well, that's a very nice compliment, Jett. I'll tell my husband you said so."

Boldly, he turned to face her. "No you won't," he gibed.

There was quite a cluster of cars parked in the drive as she came up. She had not yet learned to distinguish the Reata cars from others. Horses, too. She wished that one of these could be Jordan's and that he might be home to greet her. But that was impossible. She opened the car door, stepped out without a word or a backward glance. Slowly she ascended the steps.

She heard voices in the big room. Jordan's voice. "Yoo-hoo!" she called and felt a great surge of happiness. He was there, he would be waiting for her.

Bick came swiftly towards her across the great hall, the light from the doorway was on him, she thought, Why, he looks sort of strange and wild.

"Where the hell have you been!"

"Why, darling, you look all hot and haggard. Is anything wrong?"

"Wrong!" he yelled.

There in the big living-room doorway she saw Vashti Snyth, she was part of a confused and bewildering picture. Then she saw Luz. She was lying on the big couch in a curious stuffed-doll fashion, her mouth was open, her eyes were shut and her breathing was a snore, but more horrible than a snore.

Leslie turned her head then to stare at Vashti watching her so intently. "What?"

"The horse," Vashti said inadequately.

Bick came up behind her, his face was a curious grey beneath the russet now, and rigid. "It's our fault. She wanted to go with us. My Mistake. The Western saddle—the horse stepped in a gopher hole, deep."

"What is it?"

"Concussion. Or worse. Fracture, maybe."

"Doctor Tom. Doctor Tom Walker."

"He's here. He's telephoning."

Hurriedly then Vashti became conversational.

"He broke his leg, the horse. When he stumbled and threw her.

Luz's head came up against a mesquite stump. Bick had to shoot him."

Crazily Leslie thought, My Mistake will never have to wear that silly saddle. That will teach you not to ride in hoop skirts, Luz Benedict.

"Look out!" yelled Vashti Synth. "She's going to faint again. Bick!"

With a tremendous effort of will Leslie Benedict pulled the swirling world into steadiness. "Oh, no I'm not," she said. "I'm never going to faint again."

CHAPTER 15

EVERYBODY came to the funeral. The actual basic Benedict family was small. A closed corporation. But Texas converged from every point of the compass. Friends, enemies, employees, business connections; ranchers, governors, vaqueros, merchants, senators, cowboys, millionaires, politicians, housewives. They came, not to mourn the violent exit of Miss Luz Benedict, spinster, aged fifty, but to pay tribute to a Texas institution known as the Benedicts of Reata Ranch.

There had been no such Texas funeral since the death of Jordan Benedict Second.

Every bedroom in the Big House was filled, guests were sleeping in the bookless library. Even the old unused adobe Main House of family tradition—the house in which Bick Benedict and the Benedicts before him had been born—was opened now and aired and made habitable for the funeral guests who swarmed from every corner of the vast commonwealth and from many of the forty-seven other comparatively negligible states.

Privately the family thought how like Luz to inconvenience everyone in the Benedict world and to make them do her bidding against their own plans and inclinations. Here it was late spring and Maudie Lou Placer and her polo-playing husband had been just about to sail for a summer in England and Scotland and France. Roady Benedict had secretly sneaked a holiday from his Washington job of looking after Texas interests and was game-fishing in the luxurious wilds of the Benedict Canadian camp. Mr. and Mrs. Bowie Benedict were knee-deep in the blue grass of their Kentucky racing stables. Uncle Bawley was, as

always, a lone eagle in his eyrie at the Holgado Division spread among the mountains of the Trans-Pecos.

Leslie moved from group to group, from room to room, from crowd to crowd. Sometimes she did not try to identify herself, sometimes she said, "I am Mrs. Benedict."

"Which Mrs. Benedict?"

"Jordan. Mrs. Jordan Benedict."

Mystified for a moment, they would stare. Then, "Oh, Bick! Bick's wife. Well, say! I heard. Sure pleased to meet you."

Her husband was a stranger whom she could not reach. He was sodden with grief and remorse. In his stunned mind was a confusion in which Luz and Leslie and My Mistake and the morning of the round-up and his years of deep and hidden resentment against this dominating woman were inextricably blended. Leslie tried to comfort him with her arms about him, with her intelligence, with her sympathy her love her understanding of this emotional shock whose impact he himself did not grasp. She went from group to group, from room to room, always with an eye on Bick. To anyone who had known her in the past it would have been amazing to see how she took charge of this vast household. The obsequies had assumed the proportions of a grim public ceremonial.

"We can put up another bed in this little sewing-room. They can use the bath across the hall. . . . I know he will want to see you, he is resting just now he had no sleep last night. . . . A cake! How good of you I know it will be appreciated they are so busy in the kitchen. . . . You are Jordan's cousin Zora? Of course of course he often speaks of . . ."

The Girls were wonderful; and of the Girls Vashti Snyth and Adarene Morey were twin towers of strength and efficiency. They knew their Texas, they knew their Benedicts, they were the daughters and granddaughters of men and women who had wrestled and coped with every native manifestation from drought and rattlesnakes to Neiman-Marcus and bridge. The crowds streamed up the steps of the great front entrance, solemnly they Viewed the Remains, they swarmed in the dining-room, the grounds, the drive, the outer road, the town of Benedict, the roads for miles around were alive with them.

Bick met them all, his bloodshot eyes mutely questioning each mournful face as though hoping to find there the comforting answer to his self-reproach.

"... Well say, Bick, I sure was throwed when I heard the news...."

"... As representative of the Great Commonwealth of Texas I wish to extend in the name of my fellow citizens...."

"... Mi estimado amigo, lo siento mucho...."

Vashti Synth insisted that food was the panacea for grief. She kept plucking at Bick's sleeve, she grasped Leslie's arm, she motioned in the direction of the dining-room from which came a sustained clatter accompanied by rich and heavy scents.

"... Bick, whyn't you eat something, you look real peaked. Leslie, come on have a cup of coffee and a cake."

Adarene Morey came close to Leslie, her voice low in the midst of the clamour. "Relax. Bick's all right. It's good for him to have all these people around. Don't work so hard. Let them do the work. They're curious about you, you know. Even more than they are about seeing Luz, and how Bick behaves."

"Why?"

"The Queen is dead. Long live the Queen! If she can take it."

"I can take it."

There was a stir at the doorway, there was an acceleration of sound. "What's that? Who's that?"

Uncle Bawley's arrival was something of an event. Uncle Bawley who kinged it alone in splendid squalor at the Holgado Division, Uncle Bawley who had ignored Bick's wedding except for the sending of a monolithic silver edifice that resembled a cenotaph.

Now, as he strode through the welter of relatives, guests, neighbours and officials, Leslie was shocked. His eyes were streaming with tears, they washed down his cheeks and dropped off his chin. This was all the more startling because Uncle Bawley towered even above these Texas men who seemed to fill the rooms to bursting point with their great shoulders, their leather-coloured faces, their overpowering maleness.

Yet there was about this gigantic man a grace, an air of elegance. He was wearing a dark suit and black boots and Leslie's knowing eye was

quick to see that these garments had been born of the needle and shears of a New York or London tailor. They almost hid the slight bulge that, at nearly seventy, was just beginning to mar his waistline. His gaze was upon her and now as he came towards her Leslie was dismayed to see that he mopped his eyes with his handkerchief and she marvelled that his features were so composed under this fountain of tears.

Inadequately she murmured, "I know what she must have meant to you—your eldest niece. I am so terribly sorry for you and for Jordan and for——"

He dabbed at his eyes with his free hand. "Don't pay this no mind," he said, and his voice was gentle and low and almost caressing. "I ain't bawling. This is what they call an allergy. Took me better than forty years to find out about it."

"Allergy!" she repeated after him, stunned.

"That's right. I'm allergic to cattle. Makes my eyes water quarts."

She smiled wanly and dutifully, scenting one of these regional jokes she did not understand. She played up to it. "Tell me the rest."

"The clever new doctors found it out after I'd been snuffling and bawling around for forty years and better. All my life a cowman and the whole Benedict family first and last for a hundred years or nearly. And then a kid at Johns Hopkins finds out I'm allergic to cows."

Leslie was utterly fascinated. She forgot about Luz and mourning etiquette and bereaved relatives-by-marriage. Temporarily she even forgot about Jordan. With a hand tucked in Uncle Bawley's arm she manoeuvred him towards a quiet corner of the vast room.

"I must tell my father all about you. He's a doctor."

"He here?"

"No. No, he's at home. I mean he's in Virginia where we—where he lives. He'll be so interested. Please tell me a little more about it. The allergy, I mean. And about you. Do you mind if I call you Uncle Bawley—though I must say it doesn't suit you."

"I'd just purely love for you to do that. Leslie? I don't know as that suits you either. Usual thing I go slow with Yankees using their first names. They're touchy."

"That's funny. I think Texans are touchy."

"They're just vain," Uncle Bawley said in his soft almost musing voice. "Vain as peacocks and always making out like they're modest. Acting all the time, most of them. Playing Texas."

Gently she led him back to the original subject. "You must find it very trying—the allergy I mean. In your—uh—business."

"It's mean as all hell, pardon me, but up in the high country where I live, mountainous and the air clear, why sometimes I hardly notice it. Down here, though, in the brush, the minute I set foot it starts like a fountain. Course the dust's the worst down here. That and the wind."

"The wind," she repeated after him. "The wind the wind. Doesn't it ever stop? Don't tell Jordan—but the wind makes me nervous. Blowing blowing day and night."

"Don't pay it no mind," he said soothingly. "Texas folks are all nervous and jumpy. Don't appear to be, being so big and high-powered, but they are. You notice they laugh a lot? Nervous people do, as a general rule. Easy laughers, but yet not what you'd call real gay by nature. Up in the Panhandle they're even jumpier than they are down here in the brush. Up there the wind blows all the time, never stops blowing, even the cattle are kind of loco up there. But where I live, in the Davis Mountains, it's just about perfect."

He took from his coat pocket a folded handkerchief, white and fine, and as he wiped his brimming lids Leslie caught the pricking scent of eau-de-Cologne. This giant of the leathery skin, the gentle voice, the fine linen, the glove-fitting boots, was something of a dandy.

Now he glanced at her, a sharp sideways look.

"Maybe you think it's funny, a cowman getting himself all smelled up pretty."

"No, I like it. I like fastidious men."

"It's made me a heap of trouble. First off, my real name's Baldwin—Baldwin Benedict. Then along come this crying and that clinched it. I was Bawley Benedict. The Mexicans hereabouts call me Llorono—The Weepy. At Harvard I was full-back and heavy-weight boxer just in self-defence. I nearly wore out my knuckles proving I wasn't a sissy. I have to laugh when I think of it now."

She was looking into his face with utter concentration. "Uncle Bawley,

did you want to be a cowman? Did you want to be head of Holgado and a big Benedict rancher and all that?"

"Hell no, honey."

"What did you want to be?"

"Funny you should ask me that. I haven't thought about it for years. What I wanted to be was, I wanted to be a musician. Pianist." The big pink face was bland, almost dreamy. "There's always been music in the family, one way or another, but the minute it shows its head it gets stepped on."

"Uncle Bawley, do you mean you wanted the piano to be your career?"

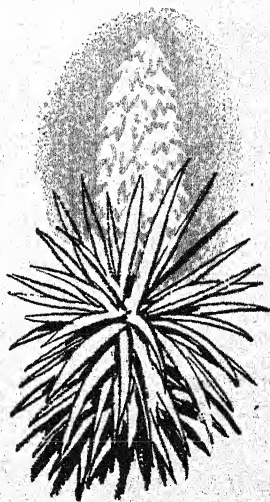
"Well, I don't know's I looked at it square in the face, like that. But when I got to Europe I studied there with Levenov till they made me come home. Big rumpus, there was. The whole family. You'd thought I wanted to run a faro wheel or marry a Mexican. They got me out roping and branding and one thing another. Nothing spoils your hands quicker than that. For piano, I mean. Time they got through I was lucky if I could play chopsticks."

"Oh, Uncle Bawley dear!" She was terribly afraid she was going to cry. She looked down at his great sunburned hands.

Apologetically he hurried on. "How'd we get on to that! Well, there was Holgado to run and I was picked to run it. Now when I look back on it, it's kind of crazy. Benedicts and big Texas ranch folks, they behave as if they are royalty or something. Old-fashioned stuff." He leaned towards her. "Let me tell you something, Leslie. If your kids get a real notion they want to do something, you see to it they do it."

"I will, Uncle Bawley. I promise I will."

"You get Bick to bring you out to Holgado for a nice visit. In the spring it's real pretty. When the Spanish dagger is out. And in summer, after the seasonal rains it's really green, places."



"Is it a success? Does Jordan—do you and Jordan think it's successful?"

"Holgado! Why, say, it's the money-maker of the whole outfit. Even Maudie Lou Placer and Bowie don't complain about its being unfinancial. Course I don't stock all the new-fangled stuff Bick goes in for here at Reata. Not that I don't think Bick's a clever boy. There's nothing he don't know about a ranch—horn hide and hair." He smiled at her, a singularly sweet and childlike smile. "I ain't talked this much to a woman for years."

"You're just fascinating," Leslie said. "You're wonderful. I love you."

From behind her shoulder came Maudie Lou Placer's high hard voice. "There are people coming in all the time, they are asking for you, naturally. Elly Mae and I are doing all we can, but Bick is worn-out and it seems to me that you and Uncle Bawley—well——"

Leslie sprang up. "Oh, Maudie Lou, I am so sorry. I wasn't thinking."

"Rilly!" said Maudie Lou in her best borrowed Eastern accent.

The big room was now so densely packed that just to elbow through it was a physical effort. Nowhere in all this vast desert could one find an oasis of peace and quiet. A clamour of talk here, a rumble of sound from the adjoining rooms and the great hall. The huge dining-room was all too small. The modest twenty places habitually laid had swollen to sixty to seventy—and now there were three rows of tables and there was never a gap in the places.

It was mid-afternoon, Leslie had eaten almost nothing that day. She looked at the great double doors of the parlour beyond—the doors so constantly opening and closing to admit the intimate hundreds to the room they called the parlour where the little angry woman lay in state. She made her way to Bick standing there near the doorway with a group of men. She slid her arm through his; she thought, He looks ghastly it's as if he had shrunk in his clothes. "Jordan, have you eaten anything?"

"Yes. I had some coffee."

"Coffee! You can't live on coffee. I haven't had anything either. Won't you come with me?" Gently he took her hand from his arm, he shook his head. "One of the girls will go with you—Adarene—here's Adarene, just here." He turned back to the men.

And here was Adarene. "You look kind of funny," said Adarene. "Are you all right?"

Leslie clutched her arm. "Adarene, would they think it was queer if I just went up to rest in my own room a few minutes?"

"Of course not."

"Will you come with me?"

Guiltily they wormed their way through the crowded room, through the hall to the stairway up and down which people she had never seen before were purposefully tramping.

Upstairs Adarene asked, "Why don't you lie down and shut your eyes, rest a while? Maybe you can sleep."

"Adarene, dear good Adarene."

"Do you want Lupe to bring you a cup of tea?"

"Not now. Just to sit here away from the crowd."

Briskly Adarene said, "Anyway, it's given you a chance to meet the State of Texas. Ordinarily it would have taken a newcomer weeks and months and years. They're all here—large and small. Old Texas and new Texas. The cotton rich and rotten rich and the big rich. Cattle, and the new oil crowd, and wheat and the Hermoso and Houston and Dallas big-business bunch."

"There's so much I don't understand."

"You'd have to be born here—about 1836."

"Adarene, are you happy here?"

"I wouldn't be happy living anywhere else. I've tried it. Texas is in my blood. I don't really know what it is—a kind of terrific vitality and movement."

"I get the feeling that they're playing wild West like kids in the back yard."

"Maybe. Some of the time. But it really still is the wild West—a good deal of it, with an overlay of motor-cars and Bar-B-Que shacks and new houses with Greek columns and those new skyscrapers that my Lucius and Gabe Target and his crowd are running up. Skyscrapers out on the prairie where there's a million miles to spread out."

Leslie walked to the window and glanced out between the jalousies and closed her eyes and came back and sat on the edge of the bed. She

smoothed the coverlet a bit, a little aimless gesture. Then she lay back and pressed her forearm over her eyes.

There was a smart knock on the door. A series of them with determined knuckles.

"Girls! Girls, can I come in?" Vashti.

"Damn!" said Adarene, under her breath; her eyebrows went up in rueful inquiry. Leslie nodded. Vashti bounced in with the over-eager uncertain look of a little girl who tags along unwanted by her playmates. She glanced from Leslie to Adarene. "Is anything the matter?"

"No," Leslie said, "I just felt I had to rest a minute."

"I guess," Vashti offered then, "you'll be glad when this is all over."

Adarene Morey took charge. "Vashti, stop talking like a dope. Do people usually like to keep a funeral going on round the house!"

"I guess Jett Rink will be, too," Vashti continued. "Glad."

"What has Jett Rink to do with it?" Leslie asked, though instinct told her not to.

Vashti now assumed the air of an aggrieved little girl. "Well, I just meant what they're saying downstairs, the men and all."

"Vashti!" Adarene said in sharp warning. "You've got no call to go snooping about picking up gossip don't concern you."

Leslie felt there had been enough of this. "Will you two please tell me what you're talking about!"

"We-e-e-ll," Vashti began, with dreadful relish, "they're saying it was Jett got Miss Luz to try riding My Mistake in the first place and it was him said he bet she could put on a hoop skirt like her grammaw and rope anything running in a round-up, and why didn't she do it and ride out just to show you——"

"Me!"

"Well, I'm just saying what they said he said, I don't know. So sure enough what does Luz do but get out that hoop skirt and a big old Western saddle with a horn like a hitching post. And the minute that horse felt that saddle and glimpsed that hoop skirt he was like possessed it took three to hold him and she hardly'd climbed on Mott said when he was off like a bat out of hell—that's what Mott said—and they're saying that after Bick shot the horse, why, Gill Dace noticed there was

a kind of funny-looking spit, like, round the horse's mouth, and so he made some tests in the lab and sure enough somebody must have given him something to pep him up, Gill said it was enough to pep up a whole herd of drought-starved Longhorns, let alone one horse."

Adarene Morey attempted to stay the flood. "That's just a lot of stable talk, I don't believe a word of it, anyway Jett Rink wouldn't dare."

She thought Leslie looked very odd, feeling about like that for the edge of the chair behind her before sinking down on it.

"He would so. He and Luz hated each other like poison, you know the way she wanted to run everybody's business her own way, look at the way she behaved about you and Bick getting married——"

Leslie stood up very tall and straight. "Thanks so much for coming up with me, it was sweet of you. I'm going down now. Are you coming?"

"Sure," Vashti agreed briskly. "I just came up to see if I could help. The boys are saying Bick gave Jett ten minutes to get off the ranch and they say he's going to take that piece of land away from him he gave him that time old Rink turned up missing, but he can't do that because Jett was smart, he's got it down on paper it's his. They started a terrible fist fight only if Gill and the others hadn't pulled them apart."

Leslie put her hand on Adarene Morey's arm. "Listen. Get hold of Lupe, will you? Tell her to bring here to my bedroom some cold chicken and a bowl of fresh fruit and a pot of hot coffee and some bourbon and ice and a quart of champagne—and if they haven't any champagne in this big damned arsenal I'll scream my head off."

"They have, honey."

"I'll be back. I'm going to get Jordan."

Downstairs she found him exactly as she had left him, a strangely shrunken giant surrounded by other giants who seemed to have gained in height and breadth in the half-hour that had elapsed since last she saw them. She came close to Bick, she spoke very low in his ear. "Come with me, dear."

He shook his head. "No. I'm all right."

She faced the men. "Jordan is exhausted. He hasn't slept or eaten. I'm trying to get him to rest before the evening—uh"—she had almost

said the evening session—"before the evening." Appealingly she looked up into those big tanned faces. "I feel quite faint myself—but that doesn't matter."

They rallied with a boom. "That's right, Bick, you go 'long. . . . You got to think of yourself and the little girl here. . . . Times like this it's the ones are left behind got to keep up their stren'th and carry on. Now you mind the Missuz and go 'long, now."

Lupe had been partially efficient for once; the bowl of fruit was there, the bourbon, a bottle of champagne in a nest of ice.

"What's this?" Bick asked testily.

"This, darling, is what's known as food and drink, and the rest of it will be along in a minute. I hope."

Bick stumbled into the bathroom as Petra flung open the bedroom door. She and Lupe carried trays, there was no table laid, Leslie cleared a space on the desk-table. She saw with utter dismay that the chicken she had envisaged as a platter of delicate cold slices in a nest of crisp green was a vast hot boiled fowl with gobbets of yellow fat marbling its skin. There was a bowl of hot mashed potatoes and a wet greenish mass that looked like boiled beet tops.

The bathroom splashings and puffings had ceased. He emerged, his face seemed clearer, younger, the sagging lines were partly erased.

"What's this?" he asked as before, viewing the table with distaste.

"It's chicken," she said briskly. "I ordered it cold and they brought it hot. This is potato, I can't imagine why, and that's some sort of greens. And this is your wife. Remember?" She came to him, she stood before him, she placed her cool slim hands on his cheeks. He bent his head and kissed her perfunctorily and walked away from her and seated himself in a chair by the window away from the food.

"A drink," she said. "You can have bourbon or you can have champagne, one or the other. You can't have both because one is grain and one is grape and they say you mustn't mix them. The French say so."

He looked down at his hands, he turned them over and inspected his palms as though expecting to find there something fresh and interesting. "The French, huh? They sure ought to know. You're hell-bent on civilizing me, aren't you?"

"Champagne I think," she said, and plunked ice into the glasses to cool them and gave the bottle a twirl. "Bourbon lasts longer but champagne's quicker. Open this, will you, dear?"

"Celebrating, aren't you?" he said, his eyes ugly.

I'm going to take over now, she told herself. I'm going to go right straight through, I'm going to jolt him out of this. "No. I just wanted to make you eat a little and rest a little because if you don't you'll be ill. And because I love you. I wasn't thinking of Luz at the moment."

He passed his hand over his forehead and brought the hand down and wiped its palm on his handkerchief. "I didn't mean—I'm all mixed up today."

"But now you've brought it up, the truth is that it was Luz or us. And it is better that it was Luz."

He brought his head down to his two clasped hands. She came to him and knelt on the floor and put her hand on his shoulder.

"Jordan, after this is over and everything is quiet, Jordan darling, couldn't we close this house or just use it for guests or something—couldn't we open the old house—the little Main House—and live in that, you and I?"

"Why? What for?" He had raised his head. He was listening.

"I like it. It's a house. I'd love to live in it."

He looked round the room now, she saw that his mind was looking at the rooms and rooms and rooms that made up this fantastic pile rearing its bulk on the plains. "What's the matter with this house?"

"It's like living in a big public institution. It's got everything but high stone walls and sentries. It's Alcatraz—without charm. Your father built this house. Do you feel sentimental about it?"

At last he was jolted out of his numbness. He stood up as though jerked to his feet. "I hate it. I've always hated it. Ma hated it, too. The only person who likes it is—was—Luz." His head drooped again.

Now! she thought. "I want our son to be born in the little old house."

"Son!" he shouted.

"It's just bound to be a son. No real Benedict would consider anything but a male first child. And I want him to be born in the house where his father was born."

CHAPTER 16

THE GIRLS said she ought to get away. "It's fierce here July and August, even for us Texans, and we're brought up on it." Proudly they quoted astronomical Fahrenheit figures. "Your condition and all, Leslie."

"My condition's fine. Fine and normal. My adrenal glands are working like a pumping station, Doctor Tom says. I'm a mass of energy."

The Girls fancied the local custom of dropping in for coffee and conversation at ten or eleven in the morning. They arrived with their hair in pins, they sat they talked they drank gallons of coffee. Or they telephoned in the morning. They sat at the telephone and talked and drank coffee. These time-wasting habits drove Leslie to quiet desperation.

Mr. and Mrs. Jordan Benedict were moving out of the Big House and into the old Main House. The county rocked with the news. Together Bick and Leslie were supervising the reconstruction of the ancient dwelling. But it was Leslie who led the project. Leslie had plans to redecorate and refurnish from eaves to root cellar. She knew exactly what she wanted, her decisions were almost instantaneous, her taste unerring, but no one was safe from her happy plans. It was as though she were giving a huge party and wanted everyone to share in the entertainment.

"Do you think this blue is too deep? Too Mediterranean? I want it to be the colour of the Texas sky. That washed grey-blue. . . . This pale yellow is just right against it, don't you think? The lemon-yellow of the *huisache* in the spring. . . . What a time I had finding this pale green, just the shade of the mesquite. Jordan says he's spent millions trying to blast the mesquite off Reata and now I'm bringing it into the house. . . . Is this the colour of mountain pinks? I've never seen them but if Jordan takes me up to Holgado later perhaps they'll still"

Bits of paper flapped in the wind. Daubs of paint waited for approval on newly plastered walls. Chairs chests tables beds appeared remained or vanished. Leslie carried note-books and a six-foot metal measuring tape.

She and Vashti now had a common bond. But these first weeks of

pregnancy were not flattering to Vashti. The Hake glands did not adjust as skilfully as did the Lynnton. Panting and uncomfortable, Vashti eyed her enciente neighbour with an expression as near resentment as her naturally placid features could convey. "It's all I can do to sit up, let alone run round the way you do. Run run run with all those samples and stuff. What do you want to go and live in the little Main House for anyway, honey? It looks like a bad old mill. All these lovely rooms here in the Big House, it's a palace. Compared to it that old Main House is a Mexican shack."

"Palaces have gone out. Like the people who used to live in them."

Jordan the erstwhile glum bridegroom, Jordan of the knotted brow and the tense jaw, relaxed in this atmosphere of bustle and change and anticipation. He laughed at her, fondly. "You're trying to turn Texas into Virginia, honey. Next thing you'll have me riding in one of those red coats and some big old bull will come along and tramp me to death."

"Why are you Texans so afraid of anything that's beautiful or moving! You're all still stamping about with a gun in one hand and a skillet in the other. You're still fighting Indians and Mexicans. Give up. Adapt yourselves. They're here to stay."

He shook his head, hopelessly. "I should have known. That very first morning up there in Virginia when you came down to breakfast blinking like a lighthouse pretending you were wide awake and used to getting up early. Talking a lot about Texas. You'd never heard of it until you reached out and grabbed me."

"My knight in shining armour! Shining, that is, if I use enough Brillo."

Grinning he regarded her and his smile faded. "Do you know what? I think you need to get away. How would it be if you took a breather somewhere cool with Adarene, maybe, or Vashti?"

"Darling, you don't know very much about wives, do you? I don't want to go anywhere until I've finished the house. And when I do go I want to go with you."

"I'm up to here in work."

"You always will be. Me too—I hope. But I'd like to see lots of places. San Antonio and the Alamo that they're always talking about."



"I know. But not there now."

"Just a day or two. And then we could go up to Uncle Bawley's in the lovely mountains. Mountains!"

"Girls aren't invited to Uncle Bawley's."

"This one is."

"No!"

"Yes! Remember he left two minutes after the funeral? He came over to me with his eyes streaming and said, 'Along about July you get Bick to bring you up to Holgado. No women as a general thing, but you're different.' I've never been so flattered. And some of those Washington boys weren't bad at it."

Luz Benedict gone. Jett Rink gone. Harmony. Peace. Home. The Big House became to Leslie as impersonal as the Vientecito railway station. Guests came, went, it was like an hotel without a receptionist or a cashier's window. Sometimes—not often—Leslie found herself watching a doorway, listening for the quick tap-tap of scurrying boot-heels, dreading to see the small vigorous figure, to hear the strident domineering voice dictating plans to the carpenters and painters. Leslie sensed that Bick, too, sometimes listened and held his breath. At such moments she would come to him and slip her arm through his and look up into his face. And she would say, as she had on her honeymoon, "I'm having a lovely time."

Almost fearfully he would bend his head to her lips. "Me too, honey."

Not gradually, but quite suddenly, she felt that she belonged. She was part of the community. Up and down the ranch. In and out of Benedict. The tradesmen and the townspeople recognized her and greeted her in open friendly Texas fashion. She drove her own car now, for short

distances. The workings of the little town, the pattern of its life, of the Texas way of living and thinking, began to open up before her observant eye and her keen absorbent mind. Her unabated curiosity was a source of mingled amusement and irritation to Bick.

"Jordan, what are those streams and streams of old broken-down lorries and Fords that go through town with loads of Mexicans? Men and women and boys and girls and even little children. Swarms of them."

"Workers."

"Workers at what?"

"Oh, depends on the time of year. Cotton pickers. And vegetables and fruit."

"Where do they come from?"

"If they're Mexicans they come from Mexico. Even a bright girl like you can work that out."

"And when everything's picked where do they go?"

"Back to Mexico, most of them. A few sometimes hide out and stay, but they're usually rooted out and tossed back."

"Where do they live while they're here, with all those children and everything? What are they paid?"

"Leslie, for heaven's sake!"

"I just want to know, darling. This is all an everyday bore to you but I'm brand-new, everything's different and strange to me. I can't help it. I am like that."

"I don't know. Very little. Couple of dollars. Whatever they're paid it's more than they'd get home in Mexico starving to death."

"Where do they live?"

"Camps. And don't you go near, they're a mass of dysentery and t.b. and every damn thing. You stay away. Hear me!"

"But if you know that why don't you stop it? Why don't you make them change it?"

"I'm no vegetable farmer, I'm no cotton grower. I'm a cowman."

"What's that got to do with it! You're a Texan. You've been a great big rich powerful Texan for a hundred years. You're the one to see to it."

He shook his head. "No, thank you very much."

"Then I will."

"Leslie." His face was ominous, his eyes stared at her cold with actual dislike. "If you ever go near one of those dumps—if I ever hear of your mixing into this migratory mess——"

"What'll you do?"

"I swear I'll leave you."

"You can't leave Reata. And to get me out you'd have to tie me up and put me in a trunk or something. And I wouldn't stay put. I'd come back. I'll never leave you. I love you. Even when you glare at me like Simon Legree."

"And you'd look like Carry Nation,* barging round stuff that's none of your business. Setting the world to rights. We'll be the laughing-stock of Texas if this keeps on. I've heard that women in your condition sometimes go kind of crazy but I never thought my wife would be one of them."

He clumped out of the room, she heard the high-heeled boots clattering down the hall, the slam of the door, horse's hoofs on sun-baked earth. He's gone. Where? Not far. Gill Dace. The Dietzes'. Old Polo. Anyone who is part of this kingdom. If Luz were alive he'd be rushing to her, his mother-sister. And she'd tell him he's right, he's always right. Should I do that?

CHAPTER 17

A FEW DAYS LATER Bick strode into her room. "I just talked to Adarene."

"Here?"

"No, Dallas. I called her. She thinks you're due for a change. So do I. Let's go up to Holgado for a few days."

"Oh, Jordan! When?"

"Straight away. Adarene said they could start tomorrow, if we can. But I said day after tomorrow."

* *Ed.* Carry Nation was a temperance reformer from Kentucky who became notorious for smashing up everything in drinking saloons with an axe.

Her disappointment was like a knife-thrust. "Can't we go alone, just you and I? It would be so wonderful if we could go alone."

"It would. I know. But there are a lot of things I've got to talk to Lew Morey about—Luz's will and a lot of things. He knows the whole family set-up. And Vashti and Pinky are——"

"No no no! Please! Not the Snyths too!"

"It's ranch business, honey."

"I can't see why that's a reason for travelling in bunches, like a safari."

"Texans always do. It's a hang-over, I reckon, from the old days when if they didn't stick together they'd be scalped by Indians."

"How are we going? A string of motor-cars? Or perhaps all of us in big hats on palominos with old Polo in the lead like a Buffalo Bill Wild West parade."

"I thought we'd drive as far as San Antonio—if you still insist on a day there, in the heat. The Moreys will come down from Dallas and meet us there. I don't want you to take a long trip by car. From there we'll go by train, a private coach, San Antonio to Holgado."

"Like royalty."

"In the last fifty years that railway has made enough off us to give us private parlour coaches for shipping beef cattle, if we want it."

Bick at the wheel, Pinky and Vashti following in the car behind them, they started two days later in the dim starlit dawn. Into the hot old romantic city of San Antonio with its hot new commercial streets like the streets of any modern American city, North or South, East or West. Leslie made no comment, she was crushed by disappointment. They passed the Plaza with its towering office buildings its busy bus station its crowds milling up and down the streets.

Ignoring the modern St. Anthony Hotel they went to the Menger because the Benedicts always stayed at the Menger. It was old Texas with its patio and its red plush and its double beds; its smell of bourbon and bay rum and old carpets and fried food and ancient dust; its tiled floor sounding to the tap of high-heeled boots and the clink of spurs.

"Well, that's more like it!" Leslie exclaimed. "I love it."

"You're pleased by the damnedest things," Bick said. "You turn up

your nose at the Big House and here's this hotel filled like a museum with the same kind of Texas stuff——"

"That's different," she argued airily. "Who wants to live in a museum! Jordan, when we really move into the Main House let's not have a visitor stay overnight there, ever. It will be our house. They can stay at the Big House, I don't care who they are. Royalty or even Papa and Mama or Maudie Lou or any other Benedict."

"I've always heard about this Virginia hospitality," he gibed.

Vashti knocked at their door, you could hear her eager small-girl voice chattering with Pinky like a child at a party. In they bounced. Ten minutes later the Moreys arrived from Dallas. The bourbon emerged from suitcases, ice and glasses came tinkling down the corridor.

Adarene, as quietly executive as a professional guide, took the plans in hand. "Now girls, we've only got this one day and part of tomorrow, and it's awfully hot. Let's get organized."

Leslie said, "The Alamo. That's the first thing."

But Adarene had made her plans more dramatically. "No, you've got to work up to the Alamo. The missions come first."

"Just a minute," Bick objected. "Those mission stairs. Leslie can't go climbing those. Every step is a foot high, they twist like a rope. I'm not going to have my son born with corkscrew legs."

"It's sort of a novelty," Leslie said, "being considered fragile."

Adarene eyed her thoughtfully. "I was just thinking. Maybe we should have gone right on up to Holgado."

"Stop hovering, dearies. I'm having a lovely time."

Lucius Morey, that strange mixture of Vermont and Texas, Lew the unloquacious, in his dark business suit and his plain black shoes and neat white shirt and the incongruous Stetson hat, had sat silent while the talk eddied about him. The bland face, the keen light blue eyes now turned towards Leslie. He spoke in that nasal dry tone that they termed his Coolidge voice.

"Leslie, you're a real fine girl," he said gravely.

Leslie did not share in the laugh that greeted this pronouncement. Just as gravely she said, "Thank you, Lucius. For the first time I feel sort of Texan, here in San Antonio."

"No wonder. This is where the whole thing began," Bick explained. "I don't mean the Spanish missions and all that. This is the real beginning of Texas. This is where two old boys, flat broke and in their fifties, met on the Plaza. One of them was the Baron de Bastrop and the other was old Moses Austin. This was San Antonio de Bexar in those days. And Americans were about as welcome in Texas then as——"

"As Mexicans are now," Leslie said.

"Texas history is real interesting," Vashti offered. "Only nobody knows anything about it only Texans. Easterners always yapping about Bunker Hill and Valley Forge and places like that, you'd think the Alamo and San Jacinto were some little fracas which happened in Europe or somewhere. Look how important they were! If it hadn't been for Sam Houston, and Bowie with that knife of his, and Davy Crockett and Travis, why, there wouldn't have been any Texas in the United States, can you imagine! No Texas!"

"Vashti, don't give any Texas lectures when Leslie's about," Bick advised her. "She began to study Texas hard ten minutes after she met me. By now she knows so much Texas history she makes old Frank Dobie look like a dam-yankee."

"Let's get going," Pinky cautioned them. "Maybe Leslie knows more but Vash can out-talk any historian living or dead. Say, Bick, you ever tell Leslie about how Texas has got the right to split up if it has a mind to?"

"No," Leslie said, mystified. "Split up? How?"

"Oh, all right," Bick groaned. "They put it in the state constitution when Texas joined the Union. She wouldn't join otherwise. It says Texas has the right to split itself into five separate states any time it wants to."

Leslie stared: "Like one of those insects," she murmured, not very tactfully, "that reproduces by breaking off pieces of itself."

"If we ever do it," Lucius Morey reflected, "we'll have enough United States senators down here in the South-west to run the whole damn country."

"Never will though," Adarene announced with definiteness. "Texas'll never split itself because if it did it wouldn't be able to say it was the biggest state, and being biggest is what we yell about most."

"Anyway, all five pieces would want to claim the Alamo for itself," Pinky concluded, "so I guess we're yoked for life."

THE NARROW RIVER meandered through the town like the stream of tourists, doubling on itself, turning up at unexpected places. Here in this ancient American city the brush-country Texan momentarily forgot about the miles of mesquite and the endless plain. Hermoso hadn't this look, or Houston or Dallas or Vientecito or Austin. Adobe huts two hundred years old crouched in the shadow of skyscrapers. Blood and bravery and beauty and terror and the glory of the human spirit were written in the history of these winding streets. They had been trails stamped out by the feet of conquistadores and of padres and the early Spanish settlers. And by the hoofs of the Castilian cattle brought in by the Spaniards in 1690. Their wild offspring, caught and bred again and again through the centuries to Longhorns Shorthorns Angus Hereford Brahmans Kashmirs, were to become the monolithic monsters who fed on the nutritious grasses of Reata Ranch.

Leslie bought a guide-book and a concise history of the city, modern and debunked. She walked about reading from these, one finger between the pages, her gaze going from book to object in approved tourist fashion. "You can't do that!" the Texans protested, outraged.

Leslie turned to a passage. "Uh, San Antonio is the pecan-shelling centre of the South-west. The industry employs about twelve thousand Mexican workers in the Mexican Quarter . . . uh . . . average piecework wage for a fifty-four-hour week is one dollar and fifty-six cents. . . ."

Gently Bick Benedict took the book from her hands and closed it. "How would you have liked it if I'd told you how Virginia——"

The tactful Adarene to the rescue. "But we stumble all round Europe with our noses in Baedeker. I don't see why we shouldn't know about our own sights."

Pinky settled it. "The Benedicts have been in these parts for about a hundred years now. Anybody round here see Bick Benedict with his face in a guide-book, he's liable to be run out of the state of Texas."

"Oh, my land let's get going." Vashti again.

They ate Mexican food to the strumming of the Mexicans' guitars on

the Plaza. Spicy burning food. Tortillas. Enchiladas. Mole de guajolote.

"What's that?" Leslie asked.

"Terrific turkey thing," Bick explained. "It's the top Mexican dish. Turkey with a sauce made of—oh—chillies and ground almonds and all kinds of spices and chocolate——"

"Chocolate!"

The musicians in their cowboy clothes. Shadowy figures in and out of the dim arcades. A vendor's soft persuasive cry. Strange exotic smells. Leslie fell silent.

Bick touched her hand. "Come on back to us, honey. What are you thinking about way off there?"

She turned towards him gravely. "I was thinking of Boston."

"Boston!"

"I mean—it's a kind of wonderful country, isn't it? I mean—I was thinking about how it all hangs together somehow even when it's as different as—I was thinking about Boston because San Antonio and Boston are absolutely the most different—the Ritz Hotel in Boston. That cool green dining-room with the long windows looking out on the Common. Those big elm-tree branches make a pattern against the glass. And the lobster so sweet and fresh and tender and the heavy white linen and the waiters' beautiful clean white finger-nails. And old Faneuil Hall." She stopped, she looked into their disapproving faces. Lamely, "I haven't explained very well. I just meant it's just a kind of wonderful country altogether, I mean——" Her voice trailed off.

She was noticeably silent in the Alamo. "I guess maybe you were over-sold on it in the first place," Lucius Morey said. "All Yankees are. Anyway, the Alamo is a feeling, not a place."

All round the adobe walls swirled the life of a modern city. Big business streamed in and out of the department stores, in and out of the new post office, in and out of the bus station. The old tragic Alamo with its history of blood and bravery was a new Alamo, reconstructed within an inch of its life.

In the glass cases were the mementoes, Proof of the mad glorious courage of a handful of men against a horde—men who had come to this Texas wilderness from Massachusetts and Tennessee, from Virginia

and Louisiana and Connecticut. In the glass cases under lock and key were the famed long rifles that had barked so hopelessly against the oncoming enemy. And there was the slashing knife of Bowie. Bowie, on his cot in the crumbling Alamo fortress, Bowie dying of typhoid and pneumonia and exposure and alcohol, wielding the pistols and the knife from his cot until they ran him through with their bayonets and it was finished. The letters under glass too—stiff formal letters written in extremity by desperate men. “. . . Your favour of the 11 Inst came safe to hand by the last mail and I will hasten to answer the contents.”

He must indeed hasten, this Davy Crockett who wrote so politely, for he was soon to die for Texas—for this strange and vast and brutal land that he and the drunken ruined brave Bowie of the terrible knife and the glory-seeking Travis all fought for and died for, though they had perhaps little legal right to do either.

There at the far end of the dim room were the six flags that had flown in sovereign authority over this violent and capricious state. Draped and festooned, they made a brilliant splash of colour against the grey stone wall. The flag of ancient Spain. Of France. Of Mexico. Of the Republic of Texas. The Southern Confederacy. The United States of America. Two hundred and fifty years of violence, of struggle, of unrest.

Leslie Benedict stood in the shadows of the great vaulted room, her head averted. “Don’t mind me. Pretend you’re not with me. I cry at parades, too, so don’t mind me.”

She stood there in the room that had become a sort of shrine to the arrogant swaggering giant—Texas. Texas. Jett Rink. Jordan Benedict. Adarene Morey. Doctor Tom Walker. Angel Obregon. Pinky Synth. Uncle Bawley. Vashti Hake.

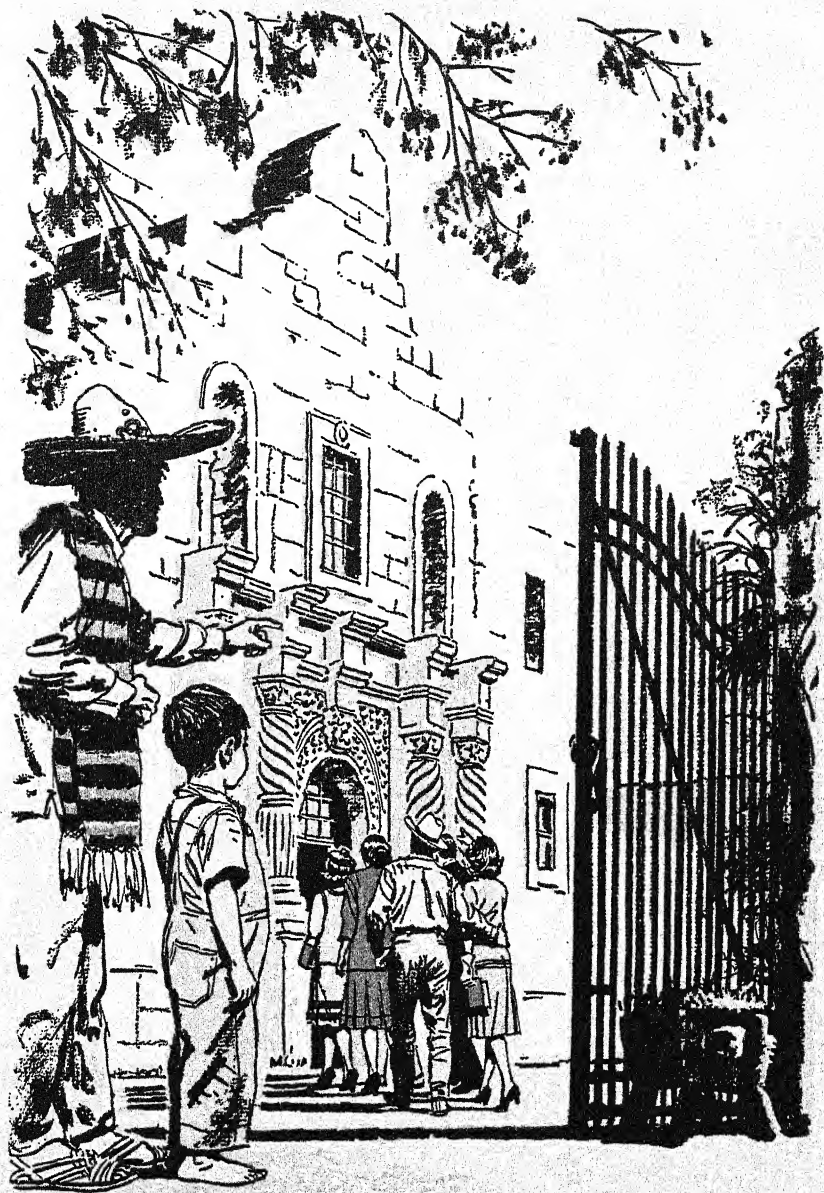
In one of the glass cases, she read again the faded ink of Travis’s desperate letters:

Commandancy of Bexar,
Feb. 23d. 3 o’clock P.M. 1836

To Andrew Ponton, Judge, and Citizens of Gonzales:

The enemy in large force is in sight. We want men and provisions. Send them to us. We have one hundred and fifty men and are determined to defend the Alamo to the last. Give us assistance.

W. B. Travis Lieut.-Col., Commanding.



Leslie stood staring at oil paintings of those to whom the men and the provisions never came. Here in crude glowing colours were depicted the dark-skinned Mexicans in natty bright uniforms and the white-skinned men in the blood-stained shirts and the buckskins of the storied pioneer, and the dark men were hacking with knives and shooting with guns at the valiant white-faced men, and the faces of the one were ferocious and of the other agonized and brave. And which was right and which was wrong? Leslie asked herself. And which was aggressor and which defender? Beside her a Mexican and his wife with a child in her arms and two other wide-eyed children gazed at the pictures and the oldest child—the boy—pointed and asked a question, puzzlement in his eyes and in his voice. And the man replied in Spanish, low-voiced.

"Better watch out, Bick!" Pinky said. "Your wife's got that look in her eye can't tear herself away from Bill Travis. Or is it Sam Houston?"

Bick laughed as he took Leslie's arm. "They were both great boys with the ladies. Which is it, Leslie? They're good and dead, so I don't have to mind too much."

Leslie turned as though she had not heard. "You were right about sight-seeing. I am rather tired."

"You take things too hard," said the practical Vashti. "What was it you were so upset about in there?"

"It could be so wonderful."

"What could? What could be so wonderful?"

"Texas."

"Texas! Listen at her! Texas *is* wonderful. Honestly, Leslie, sometimes I think you're real horrid, the way you talk."

Bick's arm was about his wife's shoulder. "It used to rile me too, Vashti, until I caught on. It's what they call impersonal observation."

CHAPTER 18

THE SPECIAL COACH had been docilely waiting for them on the siding at San Antonio, ready to be picked up by the crack express that hurtled across the continent to the Mexican border and beyond into Mexico itself. There was the porter welcoming them like an old family

servitor; the Benedicts and the Moreys and the Hakes had apparently been part of his railway life for years.

"Well, this is mighty nice," Lucius Morey said and sank into one of the great plushy seats with the air of one who has come home after a hard day's work.

Pinky tossed his big Stetson with an expert twirl so that it landed neatly in the overhead rack at a distance of twenty feet. "I haven't done so much walking since one time my horse died on me middle of the desert. I had to lug my old saddle twenty miles afoot. Nothing beats you out like sight-seeing."

"That's right," Bick agreed. "I'd rather do a day's round-up than one more mission."

The jaunt had taken on a holiday air. Everyone felt relaxed.

"George, we'll want a set-up straight away, plenty of ice. . . ."

"A menu from the dining-car, we'll eat here. . . ."

A waiter in a cardboard-stiff white apron and jacket appeared with menus.

"Tengo hambre," Pinky yelled. "Come on, amigos, let's get together on this. Vash! Girls!"

The three women emerged from their rooms along the corridor at the far end of the coach. In some miraculous way heat and weariness had vanished. They were fresh and fragrant as peppermint patties.

Solemnly they sipped their drinks and scanned the list of dinner dishes. "Six dinners to haul in from the galley back in the dining-car," Pinky said. "So don't let's go hog-wild and order the works, it'll take from here to breakfast to get it."

There was a gate—a little cross-barred iron gate—that stretched across their coach platform and separated it from the other coaches. Now and then a stray passenger would drift in past the folding gate, thinking this was a public lounge coach, he would sink into one of the luxurious seats and look about him with an air of relief and calm. Slowly an uncertain look would come into his face, then puzzlement, then embarrassment. No one said anything, the deferential coloured porter did not approach these people. They vanished, red-faced. One man came in, boots, Stetson, city clothes. He seated himself, then his

face beamed with a smile of recognition. "Well, say, Bick, you old son-of-a-gun! Pinky! Howdy, Pinky!"

"Hi!" the men said. "Howdy, Mel!"

He rose, he came towards them, then a certain something seemed to strike him, an apprehensive look came into the frank blue eyes. His stare slowly encompassed the luxurious room on wheels, the strangely empty seats, the porter eyeing him with amused hostility from the far doorway; the neatness, the lack of piled-up luggage.

"Have a drink, Mel?" Bick called to him. "How about supper with us? Had your supper?"

"Well, say," Mel stammered, blushing like a boy. "I didn't go for to stamp in on your party. Excuse me!" He shook his head and raised his hand in a rather touching gesture of apology and farewell as he walked out.

Leslie felt guilty and embarrassed but no one else seemed to attach any importance to the coming and going of Mel or his fellow travellers.

Pinky said, "Mel still got that little bitty place up at San Angelo? About fifteen sections, ain't it?"

"Thereabouts. Ten twelve thousand-acre piece," Bick said. "Over-used his grass, and over-stocked. Going under, I'd say."

Pinky disposed of him. "That's the trouble with those little fellows. Feeders. They let the grass-land run down and have to feed the young stock cake. Then they wonder where the money goes."

"Cake!" said Leslie, scenting a Texas joke.

They laughed tolerantly. Bick laid a fond possessive hand on her knee. "Cake, Yankee, is feed—cottonseed cake. Concentrated cow feed and good and damned expensive."

"That's right," Pinky agreed virtuously—Pinky the erstwhile cow-hand newly come into the prospect of two million acres. "Abuse the range-land and what's happened to Texas the last half-century! Couple inches of topsoil lost from millions of acres, that's what. Like to've wrecked the state."

Fascinated, Leslie persisted. "Then why doesn't somebody teach them not to neglect the grass-land in the first place?"

"Teach hell!" exploded Vashti. "They got no right to go ranching

on a little bitty old piece you couldn't run a goat on. They'd do better go to work for folks know how to run a real ranch. Like Pa. Or Bick. Or even the Moreys though they only run two three hundred thousand acres since they got to be city folks."

"No!" said Leslie, to her own surprise. "That isn't the way. That isn't a good way."

Vashti hooted good-naturedly. "Isn't the way! Listen at the Texian talking!"

It was not until twenty years later that Bob Dietz the agronomist spoke the words which Leslie was now too inexperienced to phrase.

"Reata," he said two decades later, "and the Hake ranch and all those overgrown giants are dated. A man who knows modern methods can make a success of four sections and not feed his stock a pound of hay or cake even in a drought season. But success or failure, a man who's running his own ranch is a man. On a place like Reata he's a piece of machinery. And anyway, no man in a democracy should have the right to own millions of acres of land. That's foolish old feudal stuff."

Now, falteringly, Leslie tried to express her own half-formed observations. "I just mean I think it's better for a million men to own their own little farms than for one man to own a million——"

"Heh, hold on there!" Bick laughed. "You're talking about the husband of the woman I love."

"That's right, you want to watch out with that kind of talk," Vashti said. "Every single thing you say is repeated all over Texas inside twenty-four hours."

"Why?"

"Because you're Mrs. Bick Benedict. And a Yankee. And different. And Texas is like that. Next thing you know they'll be saying you're one of those Socialists."

"Of course Texas," Leslie went on, "is really very conventional, so that anyone who varies from the——"

"Conventional!" shouted the Texans in chorus.

"I kind of know what she means," Adarene Morey said. "But didn't you mean provincial instead of conventional, Leslie?"

"Never mind who means what," Bick interrupted irritably. "People

have been wrangling about what T exas is and isn't for a hundred years and more. Let's talk about something else, will you!"

Smoothly Lucius Morey changed the conversation. "I'll bet anybody that in another ten years, the way the aeroplane business is booming since the war, you'll be flying up to Holgado inside an hour, instead of having to eat and sleep on a long train trip this way."

Pinky took a thoughtful sip of bourbon. "I don't know's I'd relish flying up to Holgado in all that mountain country. Too many hard clouds up round there, as the fellas used to say in the war."

Adarene Morey regarded her undramatic Lucius. "Lucius flew in the war," she said to Leslie. "You wouldn't think it to look at him, but he was an ace."

"Why wouldn't you think it to look at me?" her husband challenged her. "Mars kind of changed his face these last couple of wars. Used to be a big hairy fellow with whiskers. Now he's generally a kid just about managed to have his first shave."

Leslie regarded the bland Morey with new interest. She was silent a moment. Then she swung her chair round away from the window view of the flat land skimming by in the early evening light. "You won't believe it! I've never asked Jordan what he was up to in the war. We've all wanted to forget it, I suppose. Jordan, did you win the Battle of the Marne single-handed?"

Vashti spoke quickly. Even Luz could not have sprung more alertly to his defence. "Some had to stay home and raise beef cattle so the soldiers could eat."

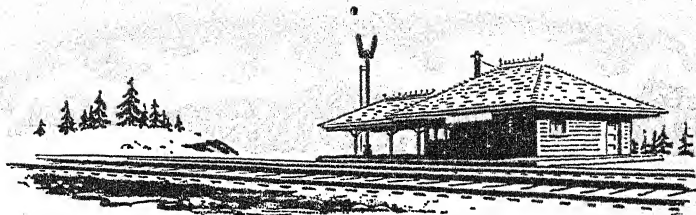
Thoughtlessly Leslie said, "Old men can raise beef cattle." Immediately she regretted it.

"If it hadn't of been for Texas," Vashti went on, "we probably wouldn't even have won the war."

"Well, now, Vash," Pinky drawled in mild remonstrance, "maybe that's a little bitty overspoken. But did seem every second one who got a medal was a Texan."

Leslie tried to cover the hurt. "I didn't mean—Jordan——"

"That's all right," Bick said stiffly. "My father was a sick man. I was twenty-two. He died just a little after. I guess he decided it might be



better in the end to raise a few hundred thousand head of beef cattle to feed the world than for me to kill a couple of Germans. Maybe he was wrong."

"Practically he was right," Leslie said quietly. "But for you he was wrong."

It was not a gay meal. The little side tables had been hooked ingeniously into the wall, the couples sat two by two before the over-abundant food. Pitchers of cream, mounds of rolls, bowls of iced butter in the true tradition of North American waste. The repast finished, the six sat replete, somewhat uncomfortable, and silent.

"We're due in at daybreak," Bick said. He stood up, yawned, stretched, peered through a window at the Texas night. "I don't know how the rest of you folks feel but I'm all for letting the scenery go by until morning."

The Benedicts had the drawing-room, the Moreys and the Snyths a compartment each. "Just roughing it," Pinky grinned. "But anyway it's better than on the ground like I've done a million times, with my saddle for a pillow."

Mumblemumble whisperwhisper! They all knew better than to talk aloud in those connecting cubicles.

"Jordan darling, I didn't mean it that way. I just remembered that we'd never talked about the war, I suddenly thought——"

Vashti expressed herself in whispers to Pinky. "Sometimes she says the meanest things and doesn't mean them, that I ever heard spoken."

Lucius Morey ran an investigating thumb over his chin as he stared at his reflection in the mirror of the little bedroom. "She'll be all right as soon as she gets the hang of Texas."

"She's all right now," Adarene retorted very *sotto voce*. "It's just Bick that will never be really in love with anything but Reata."

Next morning at dawn Leslie saw in the distance something that broke at last the limitless horizon. There, blue against the golden plain, were the mountains. She felt a lift, a lightness in the air. And there at the little station was Uncle Bawley towering yet blending into the landscape like the mountains themselves.

Leslie walked towards Uncle Bawley, she did not extend her hand to him she kept on walking and quite naturally walked into his arms and stayed there a moment with a feeling of having come home to someone she had known for a long long time.

"You better look alive, Bick," Pinky yelled. "Uncle Bawley's going to cut you out!"

Bick grinned. "I've seen history made. Uncle Bawley with his arms round a girl."

"If I'd knowed it was so easy," Uncle Bawley said ruefully, "I'd of started earlier."

They piled into the waiting car, a glittering costly thing, elegant and sleek as Uncle Bawley's boots, but a model of vintage make.

Over the roads at a fearsome Texas speed. The air seemed a visible opalescent shimmer, there was about it a heady coolness.

Seen from the road as they approached it from a far distance Holgado seemed a village in itself, a collection of adobe houses, whitewashed, squatting on the plain. But presently the main house took on dimensions, sprawling like the old Main House at Benedict in a series of rooms and patios. Here were the offices, the bedrooms, the dining-room, the big living-room whose waxed and shining tiles were strewn with Mexican rugs and the skins of mountain lions.

The thick-walled house was incredibly cool, no sunlight penetrated the deep window embrasures. Neat white bedrooms opened off a neat white gallery; neat white bathrooms, a haphazard Mexican chambermaid, a precarious Mexican waitress, a neat black male cook in a very starched white apron and towering chef's cap.

"Well!" Leslie exclaimed, coming into the cool dining-room and feeling strangely fresh and gay considering the journey and the hour.

"You pioneer Benedicts certainly rough it. What's that heavenly smell?"

"Ham and eggs and biscuits and steak and fried potatoes is my guess," Bick said, "if I know Uncle Bawley. And probably sausage and pancakes and maybe chicken."

"No, I mean an outside smell. I got it as I came along the veranda. A lovely scent, fresh and sweet."

"We had mountain showers," Uncle Bawley said. "That's the smell of wet grease-wood and piñon and grass, it's a nicer smell than any French perfume."

In came the steaming breakfast dishes in fantastic profusion, ranged on the long side table against the dining-room wall.

"Oh, how lovely and lavish!" Leslie said. "That's the way we serve breakfast in Virginia." She turned to meet Uncle Bawley's eyes. "Do you think it's the altitude makes me feel so gay?"

"Let's say it's that and the company," Bick suggested. "And maybe Uncle Bawley's coffee, it's notorious, they say a pound to a cup is his rule."

"No such thing, it only tastes like that because up here folks are already pepped up with the air," Uncle Bawley said. "Down in the brush country you got to pep yourself up with coffee every few minutes to keep going."

Leslie was never to forget these first ten days at Holgado. The clear lightness of the air exhilarated her after the humid heat of the Gulf coast country. The mountain showers seemed to bring up from the earth a sweet freshness, reticent but haunting.

"It smells like white freesias," Leslie said. "People are always making a fuss about honeysuckle and roses and magnolias. Freesias have the most exquisite scent of all."

"None of those round here," Uncle Bawley said, "but we've got a blossom up here comes out in the spring. It's called the Spanish dagger on account of the sharp spikes of the plant, they can go into you like a stiletto. It's too late now, they're finished, but the flower is white-petalled and mighty sweet. To my notion it's about the prettiest flower there is anywhere." He paused a moment. "If you can liken a person to a flower, why, I'd say that's the one you're most like."

The first evening after the very good dinner, and on each succeeding evening, the four men gathered into the tightest of knots in one corner of the great living-room. Their talk was low-voiced but their tone had the timbre of intensity. Occasionally a word wafted itself over to the somewhat looser knot formed by the three semi-deserted women. Election . . . Commissioner . . . tax . . . district . . . oil . . . Congress . . . precinct . . .

Vashti sometimes played a defeated game of solitaire through which she chattered unceasingly. "Jack on the queen two on the jack I hope it's a girl because they're so cute to fix up with pink and hair ribbons—"

Adarene was doing a *gros-point* chair tapestry, her basket of brilliant-hued wools made a gay splash of colour in the firelighted room. After three evenings of this Leslie drifted casually across the room and sat down on the couch beside Bick.

Conversation ceased.

"Aren't you men being a bit too cosy?"

Bick said, "This is ranch stuff, Leslie. Business."

"How fascinating! I'll listen. And learn a lot."

Lew Morey leaned towards her, he patted her knee in a strangely paternal gesture for a man of his years. "Now now you don't want to fret your head about such talk."

Suddenly she saw him clearly. The bland almost expressionless face, unlined, quiet. There leaped into her mind a line she had read in a newspaper story about a frightfully rich oil man from the East. He had come to Oklahoma in the early oil days of that fantastic commonwealth, he had made his brisk millions, he had lost them almost as briskly. "They cleaned me," he had said in the newspaper account. "The still-faced men. They got me."

The still-faced men. Bland. Nerveless. Quietly genial. Lucius Morey.

"We're arranging it so that you girls can have all those doodahs you're always buying," Pinky Synth explained, his rosy face creasing into a placating smile—a smile such as one would bestow upon an annoying and meddlesome brat. "All that stuff you're getting for that new house of yours. How d'you think poor ol' Bick's going to pay up for all that unless we work it out!"

The cow-hand. The shrewd pink-cheeked curly-headed little gimlet. Turned cattle king.

Leslie settled back as for a long stay. "How right you are! I ought to know. Here I am, spending all that money without realizing how Jordan has to plan and—and devise—to get it. So now you just go on talking and I'll listen as quiet as a mouse."

Bick's voice was flat and hard. "This isn't only business. It's politics. Men's stuff."

"But darling, I was brought up on politics. You lads talk as if you hadn't heard that women have the vote. To us Washington was as next-door as Benedict is here. We were in and out like whippets. Go on. Talk. I love it."

They were absolutely dumb. Uncle Bawley broke the silence. "My, that's a pretty dress you're wearing, Leslie."

In disappointment she looked at him. "You too, Uncle Bawley!"

Leslie stood up. She was furious she was confused. "You men ought to be wearing leopard skins and carrying clubs and living in caves. You date back a hundred thousand years. Politics! What's so dirty about your politics that I can't hear it! All of you smiling and conniving——"

Bick Benedict rose, he seemed to tower above her. "Leslie, you're not well——"

"I am well! I'm well in body and I'm well in mind. But mildew is going to set in. I can feel it. That slimy white sticky stuff that creeps into all the corners and closets down there unless you open the doors and windows and let the sun in."

Feeling rather triumphant though strangely shaky she walked across the room to where the two women sat like figures, she thought, in the fairy tale of the Sleeping Beauty. Vashti's right hand was suspended in mid-air, a playing card held in her fingers. Her mouth was open, her eyes very round. Adarene's needle was poised motionless above her embroidery frame. "Boo!" said Leslie.

Uncle Bawley called across the room. "What do you girls say we have a sunrise breakfast tomorrow, ride up into the hills? And I'll cook."

Vashti's childlike squeal. "Ooh! I'd love it! Let's."

"Well, then, you girls better get your beauty sleep," Pinky turned

round and said. "Or we won't be able to rout you out come daybreak."

Shrewishly Leslie called to him over her shoulder. "Yes, send the idiot children to bed so that you massive brains can talk in peace."

The men managed a tolerant laugh but Leslie hoped she detected in it a touch of malaise.

"Look, Leslie," Adarene said, "just pay them no mind. It's the elections coming up this autumn. With Luz dead and Jett Rink off the place, there are lots of things to straighten out. I heard that Jett Rink was trying to make trouble with the ranch hands."

"What's that got to do with elections?"

Adarene took three or four careful stitches, the big needle went through the coarse stiff web of the material, pop pop pop. "You've never seen one of our elections, have you?"

"No. What about them?"

"Well, sometimes it gets sort of—uh—dramatic. The Mexican vote is pretty important."

"Isn't any vote important?"

"I suppose so. There are about four million whites in Texas. And about a million Mexicans."

"Whites. Mexicans. I never thought of Mexicans as—but if they vote they're citizens, aren't they?"

"Yes. Yes, of course. But——"

Vashti, slapping down the cards with the vehemence of one who is playing a losing game, looked up. "It's real exciting at election. Regular old times, guns and all. They lock the gates and guard the fences, nobody can get out."

"Who can't?"

"Everybody. The Mexicans. The ranch hands."

"Vashti. Uh—look, Adarene. You two girls forget sometimes that I'm new to Texas. Now. They lock the gates so that people can't get out at election time. Why?"

In a tone of elaborate patience, as one would speak to a backward child, Vashti said, "So they'll vote right, of course, honey. So they won't go out and get mixed up with somebody'll tell 'em wrong. This way they vote like they're told to vote."

"Told by—who tells them?"

"Depends. Our place it's Pa and two three behind him. And now Pinky too, of course."

"Of course. And at Reata, who?"

Adarene rolled up her embroidery, her voice cut this interrogation. "How about a three-handed game of bridge if those mean men won't talk to us or play?"

But Leslie leaned towards Vashti in utter concentration. "Who at Reata?"

"Oh goodness, I don't know, I don't pay much attention to men's stuff like elections and so on. Luz, she used to be the real boss when it came to rounding up the Mexicans. Then there was Jett Rink, of course, drunk as a sheep election time but that always made him tougher and they were scared of him."

Adarene Morey stood up. "Girls, I think I'll go to bed, get my beauty sleep if we're going to get up before dawn. How about you, Vashti?"

"I ain't really sleepy. We slept so late this morning. Pinky never batted an eye till seven. I thought he was dead. It's this mountain air and all, I guess."

"Listen a minute, Vashti," Leslie went on. "What offices do they vote for? Local? State? National?"

"H'm? Oh. I don't know, rightly. Do you, Adarene? I don't pay any attention. Commissioners, I guess. Anyway, for round here. Of course, everybody is tied up with the ranches, miles and miles around. Why, they wouldn't be alive if it wasn't for us, it's their living, hauling cattle, working cattle, supplies and stuff and all that goes with it. I don't know, don't ask *me*, Pinky says I'm a nitwit about stuff like that. Whyn't you ask Bick? Bick'll explain to you all about it."

Leslie glanced towards the four men at the far end of the room. Their heads were close together, their voices low, their shoulders hunched.

"I think I'll go to bed," Leslie said. "And read."

Adarene laid a hand lightly on her arm. "Stop looking like Lady Macbeth, honey. Take Texas the way Texas takes bourbon. Straight. It goes down easier."

At ten o'clock Leslie, reading in bed, must have dozed a bit for

suddenly Bick was in the room, pulling off his boots with a little grunt.

"Jordan! I must have dropped off like a dozy old lady. It's this heavenly air."

Bick Benedict did not reply. He looked at his bride with a hard and hostile eye. Harsh unspoken words formed in his mind as he went about the business of preparing for bed. So this was Leslie Lynnton the Virginia belle and beauty that he had gone so far to get. No Texas girl good enough, huh? Oh no!

She now regarded him thoughtfully.

"Sorry about my cave-man speech, darling. I'll apologize tomorrow to the others, first thing."

"That's big of you." He came to the foot of the bed and stood glaring at her in anger. "You certainly distinguished yourself this evening."

"Sh! Jordan! They can hear every word in every room along this veranda."

"That's fine. And we heard every word you said in there, too, tonight. Dirty politics! And we date back a hundred thousand years! Who the hell do you think you are! Joan of Arc or something!"

She held her breath as the words rang through the little stark white bedroom. They were holding their breath, too, she thought, and hearing all this, there in those other little stark white bedrooms along the gallery. "I said I'm sorry about the name-calling. It was impolite. But in principle I was right."

"You come down here and try to tell us how to run the ranch! And the town! And the state! I swear I think you're crazy! Insulting my friends. I've stood it because of your—the way you feel just now. I'm through with that. You're my wife, you're Mrs. Jordan Benedict. When the hell are you going to settle down and behave like everybody else?"

She got out of bed then and stood facing him. "Never."

They stood glaring at each other. Automatically his hand came up. He stared down at it. Dropped it to his side. "I almost hit you."

"I know. My darling."

"You're running round in your bare feet. Cold."

"It doesn't matter."

"Get back into bed."

Shivering she crept between the covers. He turned out the light.

Silence in the little room, silence in all the little rooms, silence in the dark fragrant Texas night so full of turmoil and unrest and conflict.

"Oh, Jordan, I wish we could live up here in the mountains. I wish we could stay up here and Uncle Bawley could run Reata. Couldn't he? Couldn't he?"

"Get this. If you can understand anything that isn't Virginia and pink coats and hunt dinners and Washington tea parties. Just get this. I run Reata. I run Holgado. I run the damn wet Humedo Division and Los Gatos too and a lot you've never heard of. Everything in them and on them is run by me. I run everything and everyone that has the Reata brand on it."

"Does that include me?"

"Dramatizing yourself, like a cheap movie." Silence again. He spoke, his resentment hung almost a palpable thing in the darkness. "Tired. The hardest kind of a day's work doesn't wear me down like ten minutes of this wrangling. I'm not used to it."

"You're not used to marriage. . . . Jordan, who was it said that thing about power?"

"Oh, God! I don't know who said anything about power."

"Papa used to quote it. He said——"

"Papa Papa! Forget Papa, will you!"

She lay very still, concentrating. The cool still fragrant mountain night. Suddenly she sat bolt upright. Her low vibrant voice hung in the darkness. "Power corrupts. That's it. I can't remember who said it. An English statesman I think. He said power corrupts. And absolute power corrupts absolutely, Jordan."

But he did not hear her. He was asleep.

CHAPTER 19

THE BOY was named Jordan. Jordan Benedict Fourth. It became Jordy for short in order not to confuse him with his father.

Bick Benedict's happiness was touching to see. "But he's no Benedict," he said, regarding the black-haired dark-eyed morsel. "He's his

mother's son. I've been cancelled out of the whole transaction."

"You're just disappointed because he didn't turn out to be that perfect Hereford-Kashmir bull calf you've been trying to produce."

A month later Vashti Hake Snyth presented Pinky with twin daughters. Mercifully, old Cliff Hake had died just before the birth of the twins.

The mammoth matron made no secret of her disappointment. "In a way I'm glad Pa went before the twins came. He was angry enough when I was born. They say he wouldn't speak to Ma for a month after. He'd prolly have disinherited me, seeing these, or shot Mott for a Texas traitor."

She called the plump girl babies Yula Belle and Lula Belle. As they grew in length and width and attained young girlhood they were fated to be known to the undazzled swains for five hundred miles in every direction as the Cow Belles.

Jordy Benedict was scarcely a month old when his father gave him his first reata, his boots, his Stetson, his saddle, all initialled, all stamped with the Reata Ranch brand. As he outgrew the tiny boots expressly made for him fresh ones were ordered, exquisitely soft bits of hand-fashioned leather. When they were made Ildefonso Mezo, the expert leather craftsman in Benedict, had taken the baby foot in his brown sensitive hand. He saw that it was not high-arched like the feet of a century of booted Benedicts. Hesitantly, frowning a little, the boy's small foot in his palm, he looked up at Bick Benedict.

"Plana." He ran a finger over the instep. "Flat. This is more the foot of a dancer."

"Dancer!" yelled Bick.

"This is not a foot for the stirrup."

"It damned well will be."

Now the boy was seven months old. Leslie longed for her father to see him; to show him to her mother and her friends. She began to plan a Virginia visit. "It's been almost a year and a half. I can hardly believe it. Jordy'll be all grown up before they see him."

"Why don't they all come here for a visit?" Bick suggested.

"I wrote them. But Papa can't get away just now. Lacey's got a beau who isn't safe to leave she says. Mama alone . . . ?"

"You're right." Hastily.

"I feel so—I don't know—kind of listless and no appetite and this morning——" She stopped, struck by a sudden suspicion.

Doctor Tom had made the suspicion a reality. "No!" Leslie, appalled, had rejected the diagnosis. "I can't! Jordy's only seven months old!"

"Everything grows fast in Texas."

"I won't! There'll be only—let's see—nine—sixteen months between them. I won't!"

"You're a healthy young woman. It'll be all right, Leslie. If this one's a girl you'll have a nice start towards a real family, all in about two years." Doctor Tom regarded her with keen kind eyes. "It's better this way. Two somethings—real and important—to tie you to Texas."

Bick had been startled, then hilarious and definitely pleased with himself. "I'll consent to a girl this time, just to show you I'm no pasha."

Half laughing half crying, "I'm like one of the Mexican brides. I haven't even had a chance to wear my trousseau dresses. They'll be museum pieces."

"Give them to the Mexican girls round the house."

"Mama would sue." A terrible thought struck her. "Now I can't go home."

"Next year then, honey. In triumph."

CHAPTER 20

EVEN BICK conceded that the girl, from the moment of her birth, was completely a Benedict. She was fair as her brother Jordy was dark, sunny as he was sombre. "Well, that's more like it!" Bick exulted. "Too bad we can't switch them round, but anyway now we're really coming through with the strain." With a cautious caressing forefinger he traced a path down the fragile pink face from brow to chin.

"Luz. H'm? We'll call her Luz."

"No!" Leslie cried. "We've never even mentioned that among the names we've——"

"Yes, but she looks it, though. All that yellow hair and blue eyes and look at that skin! Luz Benedict. Luz. It means light."

"If it's light you want we'll call her Claire. Not Luz. Never Luz."

"Nothing to get so upset about, honey. If Claire is what you want then it'll be Claire."

But he fell into the habit of calling her Luz. Just a kind of nickname, he said. And in time the child and everyone who knew her forgot that she had ever had another name. The child was Luz to the hundreds on Reata, Luz at school, Luz to her friends. She herself forgot the name of Claire and signed herself Luz Benedict. At boarding-school she explained, "I was called after my aunt, Luz Benedict. You ought to hear the stories about her! A real Grade B Western movie type."

Soon after Luz was born Leslie began to long again for a glimpse of her family; for Virginia, for a taste of the easy graceful life of her girlhood. "This is your home. But you talk as if you were homesick," Bick said.

"I suppose I am. I suppose I will be until I see it again."

"It's going to feel mighty funny to me, end of the day, no kids no wife."

"It will be fine for both of us. We've been together every day every night since the day we were married."

"Isn't that good?"

"It'll be better after a few weeks apart."

"All right, all right. Tell you what, I'll come up and call for you. I'll have to go to Washington anyway about that time. That's what I'll do. Otherwise you'd probably never come back to this poor old beat-up cow-hand."

Though they spoke lightly they were both terribly in earnest. This was more than a little visit to the family back home in Virginia. This was a long look round. This was a separation in spirit as well as body. These two terribly dissimilar people would not admit even to themselves that they were about to take a cool detached look at the brief tale of their married years, and a long speculative look at the years that stretched ahead.

In the spring she made the trip to Virginia, travelling in true Benedict

tradition in a private coach with two Mexican nursemaids; Petra her own maid; a welter of trunks, boxes, bags, small luggage; and gifts ranging from a complete Western riding-outfit for Lacey to crates of Valley grapefruit and bushels of paper-shell pecans.

The safari wound its way out of the train to the station platform in such a brouhaha of squeals shrieks chatter laughter tears Spanish English and Southern sweet talk that Leslie only tardily became aware of the actual presence of her sister Leigh, Lady Karfrey, here in the flesh in Virginia instead of being a voice on the overseas telephone from England.

"Leigh!" Her surprise was less than completely joyous. She looked about her. "Is Alfred with you?" She hoped not, she wanted only her own dear family for this homecoming.

"He's joining me in a few weeks. Leslie, he's mad to see Texas."

But there was no time now to go into this. Jordy and Luz were being kissed, exclaimed over, thoroughly disorganized. Howling, they were carried off by their Mexican nurses who conversed in a torrent of Spanish to the Lynntons' Negro servants.

Mrs. Lynnton said, "Leslie! Your skin!" She said, "Leslie! Your hair!" She said, "Leslie Lynnton, that's one of your old trousseau dresses."

Lady Karfrey said, "You travel like an East Indian maharani. I thought Texas was a republic or a democracy or something. Do all Texans travel with a retinue?"

"Only a few."

Lacey looked at her gift of the massive Western saddle, the hand-tooled boots, belt, reata, as one would gaze upon an exhibit of prehistoric tribal utensils. The saddle especially fascinated her. "It looks like a rocking-chair. And all that carving! It weighs tons, doesn't it? . . . What a pommel! Goodness, look at it miles high, what do they use it for—flying the Texas flag?"

Doctor Horace Lynnton said, "Well, Leslie."

It was she who threw her arms about him and held him close as if he were a child. "Oh, Papa!"

He held her off and regarded her with the eyes of a loving father and

a great physician. Then he nodded his head as at the conclusion of a satisfactory diagnosis. "You've come through it all right. Some scar tissue. But in the main a triumph."

In a haze of sentimental remembrance Leslie walked through the lovely and beloved old house. The drawing-room. How faded the curtains were. Her old bedroom so tidy now, with the bed head pushed against the wall. It all looked shabbier than she had so longingly pictured it in these past nostalgic years. And smaller. There was the apple orchard in bloom. With the new vision of one who has seen a vast domain equipped with every modern mechanical device she noted that the trees badly needed spraying and pruning. Here in Virginia and Washington and Maryland were the boys and girls—men and women now—with whom she had spent her carefree girlhood and the more serious years of young womanhood during the war. Now they welcomed her with all manner of festivities. Cocktail parties. Hunt balls. Dinner parties. Teas. Receptions. Luncheons. Presidential, ambassadorial, senatorial affairs, quite splendid and formal. Local society affairs, quite the opposite.

There was a great deal of talk about a catastrophe called the Crash, and a long-lasting condition known as the Depression. This, it seemed, was an emotional as well as a financial condition. People dated things from it as they once used the war. "No, we haven't had one since the Depression. . . . I used to but that was before the Depression. . . ."

She was having a dazzling time of it. Old friends, new clothes, delicious food; gaiety, amusing talk; girlhood beaux who had not found consolation in her absence. Surprisingly, they all seemed to have learned quite a lot about Texas. Modern Texas.

"How did you know that!" Leslie would exclaim when someone referred airily to the vast Hake or Beezer or Waggoner or King or Benedict ranches; or to Neiman-Marcus in Dallas or the newest skyscraper in Houston.

"Everybody knows about Texas," they said. "It's getting to be the fashion. Pretty soon Texans won't even have to brag any more."

A newly met acquaintance at a Washington dinner might say, "I know you're from Texas, Mrs. Benedict. Well, of course we've all heard of the fabulous goings-on down there. Exaggerated, I suppose?"

"No. Understated."

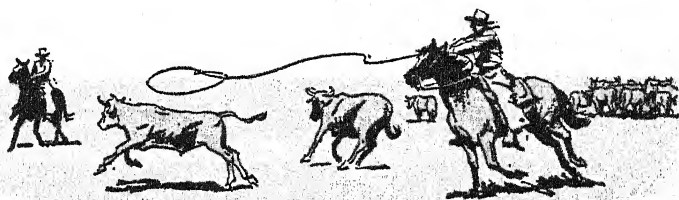
If he happened to be a somewhat stuffy newcomer he would smile uncertainly, scenting a note of sarcasm. Reassured by Leslie's earnest gaze, he would go on. "But I suppose the Depression has hit you folks down there just as it has everyone else. Wall Street has a long reach."

"No one ever complains about the Depression down there. I don't think it has touched them. Us. When I left Texas everything seemed as booming as always. If anything, a little more so."

Lady Karfrey was determined to visit Leslie in Texas and after many broad hints, finally moved in for the kill.

"Let's talk about our visit. When would it be convenient for you?"

"Leigh, we'd love to have you, of course. But I don't know that you'd



like it, really. Alfred isn't used to—he'd find it too terribly hot after the cool English——"

"Nothing's too hot for the English," Leigh Karfrey stated with great definiteness. "Or too cold. Remember India. And Hudson's Bay. And all that. They just put on a topi or long woollen underwear as the case may be, and thrive. They always have."

"But you can be frying under the sun at noon and freezing an hour later in a sudden norther. Texas is like that."

"It sounds absolutely Alfred's cup of tea," said Lady Karfrey.

"But," Leslie said deliberately, "I don't know when I'm going back."

There was the silence that follows indrawn breaths. When she had recovered, "Just what does that mean!" demanded Mrs. Lynnnton.

"Benedict's in Washington, isn't he, next week, that is?" Lady Karfrey marshalled her facts. "He's calling for you, isn't he? To take you and the children back? You said."

"That was the plan."

"Was!" shrilled Mrs. Lynnton.

Doctor Horace Lynnton stood framed in the veranda doorway. "Want to take a little walk with your old pa, Leslie? I've hardly seen you or talked to you since you came. Really, I mean. And now this talk of going back home." Wordlessly she joined him, she tucked her hand in his arm, close, as they descended the broad shallow steps to the garden.

The somewhat stooped elderly man and the blooming young woman walked together through the garden, through the orchard, across the meadow and into the woods as lovers would have walked, seeing nothing with the conscious eye. Silent.

When Doctor Lynnton broke the silence it was as though he were continuing a spoken conversation. "Of course it's something no one can decide for you. But if you feel like talking about it a little. . . ."

"Oh, Papa, I'm so confused."

"You don't love him?"

"That's the terrible part of it. I do. Not only that, I'm in love with him. More than when I married him."

"But he seems to me to have a first-rate mind, too. Not only clever but aware and civilized. And, amusing too, I thought. Amusing is very important after the first years."

She thought of her mother. Not amusing. She pressed his arm. "Yes, he's all those things. But he's got that blind spot. Papa, he and I don't see alike about a single thing—except unimportant things. Handsome intelligent sexy ambitious successful vital amusing tender tough. Everything."

"But——"

"Power-mad. Dictator. His thoughts and energies and emotions are bounded by the farthest fence on the remotest inch of Reata Ranch. He's not unkind to people. Around, I mean. But to him they're only important in relation to the ranch, his life, Texas. He'll never change."

"No. But you're forgetting something."

"What?"

"The world will. It's changing at a rate that takes my breath away. Everything has speeded up like those terrific engines they've invented

these past few years. Your Bick won't change—nor you—but your children will take another big step. Enormous step, probably. Some call it revolution, but it's evolution, really. But no matter how appalled you are by what you see down there in that strange chunk of the United States, still, you're interested. Aren't you?"

"Fascinated. But rebelling most of the time."

"What could be more exciting! As long as you're fascinated and as long as you keep on fighting the things you think are wrong, you're living. It isn't the evil people in the world who do the most harm. It's the sweet do-nothings that can destroy us."

Bick Benedict, when he arrived, seemed by his very buoyance to make all this talk mere academic babble. He was a mass of charm and high spirits. Virile handsome actually boyish, Leslie thought she had never seen him so pleased with himself and the world. In the first flush of their reunion she thought it was herself and the children that gave him this vibrating aura of well-being and elation.

But she began to detect something within himself that was the source of this bubbling.

Surveying him with a wifely gaze, "What makes you so full of beans? This glitter in your eye can't be just wife and children."

"Purely spiritual, honey. It's just the result of all that high-minded talk down there in Washington. They've voted to continue the twenty-seven per cent tax allowance on oil."

"But you haven't any oil. Have you? You've always said you hated the oil wells."

"That's right."

"I don't understand."

"But I'm very happy about oil—off my land. I don't mind others having it because from now on the whole world is going to be yelling for oil. Texas is booming. The rest of the country is flat."

"Is that good?"

"Only good enough to make us the richest state in the whole country. We're a country within a country."

"Again!"

"Oil and beef and cotton. You can't stop it, you can't top it."

He gazed round and about the Virginia landscape and he laughed.

"It looks so little! The fields. And the sky. Are you ready to come back with your old man, honey?"

"Jordan, I'm no different from what I was when I left."

"I don't want you different. We Texians like a little vinegar on our greens. Gives it flavour. Come on, let's go home."

CHAPTER 21

ON THE JOURNEY homeward Leslie said, "If you had told me, on our honeymoon, that the next time we made this trip I'd be travelling with you and masses of our children and hundreds of nurses and millions of bags and bottles and toys and stuff!"

"You'd have made it anyway."

"You're so pleased with yourself I think this is the time to tell you that Leigh meant it when she said she and Karfrey want to visit Reata."

"Why not?" Bick demanded, largely. "Penned up on that little island all their lives! Do 'em good to have to hunt for the horizon. Anyway, it'll be worth it to see Karfrey in a ten-gallon hat."

"I wish Papa and Mama would come down at the same time. And Lacey too. Just to take the curse off the Karfreys."

His well-being encompassed this without a sign of strain. "That's a fine idea. Folks down here are beginning to think you're an orphan. Look, I'm going to send them all a telegram at the next stop."

DOWN THEY CAME to Reata, the lot of them, and adapted themselves to the climate, the environment and the customs with astonishing ease. Lacey was off on a horse from morning until night, more at home in the stables than in the house. The vaqueros adopted her as one of themselves, they explained in Spanish and she understood in English. Even old Polo demonstrated to her the value of the breed of fleet-footed creatures whose swift quarter-mile spurting powers were invaluable in the round-up and on the range. Quarter-horses, they were called.

Mrs. Lynnton took alarm. She sought out Bick. "Lacey spends all her time with those Mexican men, no one knows where she is the day

through and half the night. I've spoken and spoken to Horace about it but he's as bad as she is."

Bick grinned, he pretended to misunderstand. "No! You mean the Doctor's galloping round on quarter-horses!"

"You know perfectly well he's down at that laboratory of yours with that vet, or poking into the wretched shacks round here, looking for local diseases, they're worse than any slave quarters in the old Virginia days I can tell you."

He could not be angry with her, though he thought privately that he would like nothing better than to drive her out to really good rattlesnake country some hot bright afternoon.

One evening at supper Lacey, full of her day's doings, said, "I rode miles and miles today and ended up at the Dietzes' place, that little Bobby Dietz is the cleverest little boy I ever saw. Not clever clever like Eastern kids but wise clever. He knows about soil and cattle and feed and horses. The Dietzes say they're going to send him to Texas U., but he says he wants the husbandry course at Cornell. If he were ten years older I'd ditch my beau and marry him. What a kid! . . . Look, Bick, there was a fellow in the camp today he came rushing in sort of wild-looking and covered with grease and driving the worst broken-down Ford I ever saw. He gulped down his lunch red hot though I must say the Mexican boys didn't seem very glad to see him. When he found out who I was he was really rather nervy. I mean not like the cowboys and vaqueros I've met, I think he'd been drinking. He wanted to know all about you, Leslie."

Bick stopped her. "What was his name?"

"Something that sounded like Jeb——"

Bick pushed back his chair and stood up. "I've told them that if he ever sets foot on my land they're to shoot him."

"Now, Jordan," Leslie said quietly. "Sit down and finish your dinner."

"I've finished. Excuse me, folks. I've got some business to tend to." They heard him a moment later talking on his office telephone, the Spanish words drumming.

After dinner Doctor Horace took Leslie aside. "Tell me something

about this fellow Lacey was talking about. I don't like to see a big full-blooded man like Bick go as white as that."

"When Jordan's sister died I didn't write you and Mama all the queer details because you'd have been upset. I was. Horribly. I don't yet quite understand the whole gruesome business."

She told him, speaking rapidly and very low, meanwhile smiling and nodding reassuringly across the room at her mother. "What are you two whispering about?" that lady demanded. As Leslie talked and her father listened she began to feel strangely relieved as from a burden. "You see, he's just an ignorant crude lout. But tough. He has some sort of crazy plan in his head, I suppose. But I can't understand," she concluded, "why Jordan takes him so seriously. He's nothing, really."

"Nobody's nothing," Doctor Lynnton said. "You can't cancel out any living human being. Sometimes they surprise you. This boy has a deep grudge. Not only against Bick, I'd say, but against the world. If he's strong enough and carries it long enough he might do quite a lot of damage."

"I don't see how. He can never touch us, that's sure."

The visitors met and were entertained by the neighbours for hundreds of miles round. "Con Layditch telephoned," Bick would announce casually. "Wants us all to go over, they've finished their new house, they're having a barbecue and square dance to celebrate." At an anguished look from Leslie, "No, honey. Steaks."

The visitors would find themselves whirled two hundred miles for dinner.

Leslie had dreaded the inevitable meeting between Vashti Snyth and Lady Karfrey. They came together with a clashing of broadswords. After the first encounter Leslie found herself defending the people and customs she herself had so recently criticized.

"Vashti is a college graduate. She's travelled quite a lot in Europe. They go East every year. She speaks French very well."

"It hasn't touched her," Lady Karfrey asserted. "She's a Texas national monument like the Alamo or that cow you showed us in the glass case in the village. Neither college nor Europe or time or tide will ever change her. I hope."

Conversations between Vashti Snyth and Leigh Karfrey were brisk and bristling.

"My, I should think it would feel wonderful for you to get where you can really draw your breath," Vashti said with that tactlessness which was, perversely enough, a rather endearing quality in her. "That little bitty old England, you can't take a good long walk without you fall over the cliffs into the ocean. I like to choke to death there in all that cramped-up fog. And then the mutton. Mutton! My."

"You imported all our beautiful English Herefords. And immediately they arrived they fell heir to your cattle diseases—pink-eye, and ticks, and worms!"

"We're trying to breed out all the Hereford strain in our stock. We don't really need to haul anything in here. We got everything. We got cattle in plenty. And cotton. And wool and mules and grapefruit and horses and wheat and turkeys. And Mott, my husband, says we got sulphur and coal and copper and lead and a thing called helium—I don't rightly know what that is, but anyway it's good stuff to have about—and lumber he says and limestone and vegetables in the Valley, and pecans. And a course all this oil now. We got just everything in Texas."

Lady Karfrey cleared her throat.

"I have been gathering a few facts, dear Mrs. Snyth, since I arrived in your state. Everything you say is true."

"Sure it's true," repeated the unsuspecting Vashti.

"As you say, of all the states Texas is first in cotton—but last in pellagra control. First in beef—and forty-fifth in infant mortality. First in wool—and thirty-eighth in its school system. First in mules—and forty-seventh in library service. First in turkeys—and its rural church facilities are deplorable. First in oil—and your hospitals are practically non-existent—"

Magenta surged into Vashti's indignant face.

"I never saw such poor runty beat-up looking people in my born days as you got in what you call the East End. And poor teeth and bad complexions, drinking tea all the time and nobody in the whole country gets milk and oranges and he says the roast beef of old England is a non-existent, Mott says."

Strangely enough it was Karfrey, the Englishman, who said, "How right you are, Mrs. Synth. But then you must remember that you could put all of England down in one corner of Texas and never find it, really."

THE visiting Lynntons and Karfreys usually drove over from the Big House before dinner to lounge in comparative coolness on the Main House veranda. There were always tall iced drinks, the Gulf breeze filtered through vines and screens, the voices of the children came pleasantly from the far end of the veranda. It was the most relaxed hour of the day, it was the time that Leslie liked best.

They were discussing Jordy's friendship with little Angel Obregon, whose sick mother Leslie had helped during her first day at Reata. Bick explained, "His father Angel Obregon used to be my chum when I was a kid. And his father's father taught me roping—he and old Polo. Even today old Angel is the best mangana thrower on Reata. In Texas, for that matter."

"This could be wonderful," Doctor Horace mused aloud. "Maybe some day it will be."

But no one consciously heard him or heeded him, except Leslie.

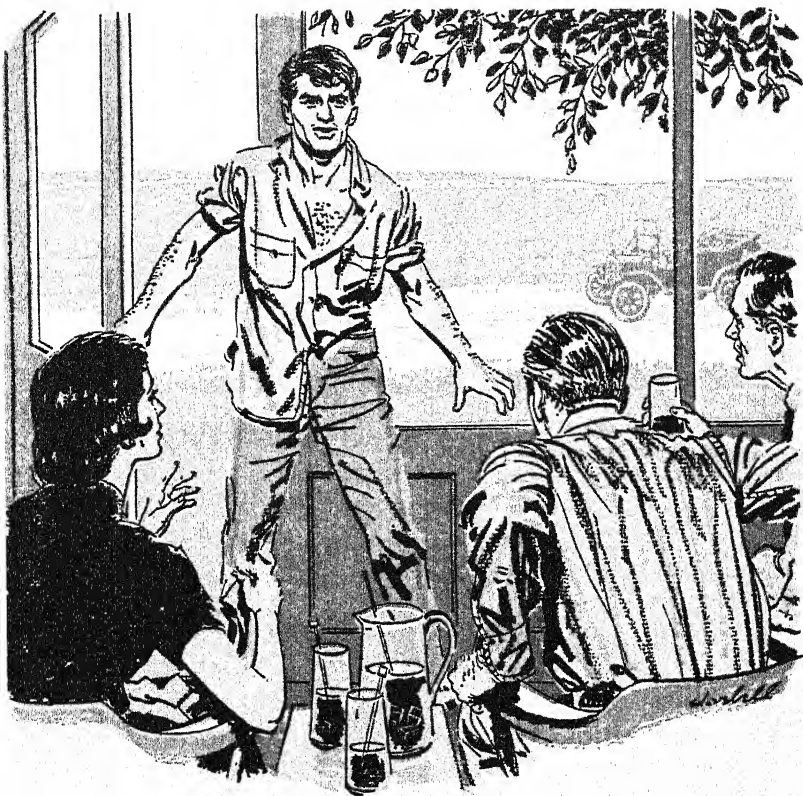
"Mangana?" inquired Sir Alfred.

"To throw the mangana you have to be a brush roper. And roping in the brush is trickier than roping in the open. For the mangana the animal is running and the roper is standing still. The loop turns over in the air and it catches the animal high round the front legs so's not to break the leg between the brisket——"

But now there was the sputter and cough of an engine in the drive. A grease-spattered Ford with flapping mudguards came to a stop with a shrill squeal of old brakes and seared tyres.

Jett Rink's face was grotesque with smears of dark grease and his damp bacchanalian locks hung in tendrils over his forehead. He leaped from the car and began to run as he landed, without a pause, and he limped a little as he ran.

He came on, he opened the door of the screened veranda, he stood before the company in his dirt and grease, his eyes shining wildly. Leslie thought, Now he is really crazy something terrible is going to happen.



The man stood, his legs wide apart as though braced against the world, the black calloused hands with the fingers curiously widespread as they hung, his teeth white in the grotesquely smeared face. He stared at Bick with those pale blue-white eyes and there was in them the glitter of terrible triumph.

Bick did not even rise from his chair. Very quietly, sitting there, he said, "Get out."

Jett Rink spoke four words only. His voice was low and husky with emotion.

"My well come in."

"Get out of here."

Now the words shot geyser-swift out of Jett Rink's mouth like the earth-pent oil his labours had just released.

"Everybody said I had a duster. You thought ol' Spindletop and Burkburnett and Mexia and those, they was all the oil there was. They ain't, I'm here to tell you. It's here. It's right here. I got the laugh on you."

Now it was plain the man was drunk, the eyes were bloodshot, you could smell the raw liquor on the heavy hot air of the shadowy veranda.

Bick leaned forward slightly, his muscles tensed; and still the others sat staring at the man.

"My well come in big and there's more and bigger. They's oil under here. They's oil here on Reata and someday I'm going to pay you a million dollars or five million or ten and you'll take it because you'll need the money. I'm going to have more money than you ever saw—you and all the rest of the stinkin' Benedicts!"

Now, rather wearily, Bick stood up, he said, "Leslie, honey, you and the girls go along indoors." Leslie stood up, neatly folding the bit of sewing in her hands. But she did not go.

"Go along home now, Jett," she said. "It's nice you've struck oil. Go along now." As she would have spoken to a stray that had run in on the place, man or animal.

He looked at her, lurching a little with weariness or drink or both. Then, with the swiftness with which he always moved, the man came over to her, he reached out and just jerked ever so lightly with a grimed hand one end of the soft little bow that finished the neckline of her silk dress. He tweaked the piece of silk with a gesture that would have been insolent even in an intimate and an equal.

"My, you look pretty, Leslie," he said. "You sure look good enough to eat."

Bick's first blow struck him squarely in the jaw but Jett Rink's monolithic head scarcely went back with it. Bick hit him again, Jett dodged slightly and the blow landed full on his mouth and a little blood trickled down his chin and he twisted his mouth as though he were eating and she thought he was going to spit out the blood full at Bick, but

he laughed only and did not even lift his hand to wipe the blood away.

"My, you're techy, Bick," he said. "You're techy as a cook."

Karfrey came forward, and Horace Lynnton. And now Jett Rink turned as though to go, grinning, and Bick rushed to grapple with him. Jett Rink's knee went sharply back and then drove forward like a piston and struck Bick squarely on the groin. Bick grunted. Doubled. Even as they caught him and dragged him to a chair Doctor Horace Lynnton's hands were moving expertly over him.

Jett Rink had leaped into the battered car, had spun it like a crazy toy, was off in a cloud of dust.

CHAPTER 22

"No!" Bick commanded, fuming among his pillows. "Keep Roady away and Bowie, too. Get Bawley on the telephone."

Uncle Bawley had come down from Holgado in a swift overnight journey. Now he sat in Bick's bedroom, and for once it was the Lynntons, not the Benedicts, who held conclave: Doctor Horace, Mrs. Lynnton, Leslie.

"Soft!" Uncle Bawley declared, his gentle voice soothing the sting of the words. "That's what's botching up this world. Everybody's turned soft. Pulled your gun and shot him, Bick, you'd saved yourself a heap of trouble. But no, you let him give you the knee and stroll off. Now you can't do a thing."

"Why not?" Mrs. Lynnton demanded. "Why not, I'd like to know! We saw it, all of us. You can call Leigh and Alfred. They'll tell you. And Lacey."

"Bring 'em on!" Bick shouted, glaring. "Bring everybody! Call in the house help. Call in the county!"

Leslie, seated at the bedside, leaned towards him, gently she placed her hand on his waving arm. "Now darling, you know perfectly well no one saw except my own family."

Uncle Bawley rose, a commanding figure in the room now so charged with conflicting emotions. "Look how it sounds. Rink's fired from the ranch a few years back. He don't seem to hold a grudge, he starts

wildcatting for oil with no money, no crew and no sense on the little piece of no-account land Bick gave him long ago, deeded. And what does he do, he hits oil. So he jumps into his junk-heap car to tell his old boss Bick about his good luck." At a growl from the man in the bed—"Well, now, Bick, I'm just telling it the way it would sound, told. And this young fella spills his good news and his old boss throws him out and wallops him in the jaw front of everybody. That'd go good in a court of law."

"I wasn't thinking of the law," Bick said, sullenly.

"Furthermore," Uncle Bawley went on, "look what I heard this morning. Just on the way from Viento to here. I heard Rink's got hold of leases on pieces around. No-account land that's prolly rotten with oil."

With a mighty gesture Bick threw the bedclothes aside. "I'm going to get up. What am I—Du Barry? Vamoose, ladies, as they say in the Westerns, unless you want to see a really fine physique in the raw."

Leslie glanced quickly at her father but he only smiled approvingly. "That's fine, Bick. You're all right."

"Where's the kids?" Uncle Bawley demanded. "I want to look at something fresh and pretty. I suppose old Polo's got Jordy up on a horse roping a steer every morning before breakfast."

Leslie tucked her arm through his as they walked towards the veranda. "Jordy doesn't like riding. He isn't even interested in horses, much."

"No!"

"I sometimes think perhaps he's a little like you—when you were a child, Uncle Bawley."

"Poor little maverick."

"Luz is the rancher and cowboy. Do you know what that baby did! She somehow got hold of Jordy's riding things and there she was wobbling about in high heels and the trousers wrong side out, and the Stetson down over her ears. I've never heard Jordan laugh like that."

"Luz, h'm?" he glanced, a quick sideways look, at Leslie. "She sounds like she's taking after—uh, bossy too?"

"Well, independent."

"And Bick, he's hell bent on breaking Jordy in already, I bet."

"Yes."

"There's a difference between breaking in and just plain breaking."

"Somebody will have to help me. Later."

"I'm good for another fifteen eighteen years—maybe twenty. Hard cash and a pretty good brain. Neither of 'em going to go soft on me even time I'm ninety unless the United States and me are both hit to hell."

She looked up at him. "Thanks, Uncle Bawley."

When the family left Reata—the Lynntons and the Karfreys to the east, Uncle Bawley to the west—a new peace seemed to settle down upon the Main House, upon the ranch, even upon the town of Benedict. Nancy Lynnton, departing, had flung a final shower of admonition at her daughter. "... and watch that cook he'll poison you yet ... hardly more than a baby and putting him on that huge horse ... get a good rich skin cream and pat it in night and morning ... children ... Mexicans ... sun ... wind ... dust ..."

"Mama's marvellous," Leslie remarked, feeling strangely gay and released. "In those last ten minutes she covered everything in the heavens and the earth beneath."

"Families are fine," Bick announced. "But they should be exposed to each other one member at a time. That goes for my family too, so don't get your feathers up."

For the first time since her coming to Texas she felt something that was almost contentment. She had seen her old home and her friends in Virginia; her family had seen her new home. There, she thought. That's that. Now then. Jordan. Jordy. Luz.

Suddenly, as she looked at herself in the mirror there in the intimate quiet of their room—the guests gone, the children asleep, the world their own—she had a disquieting thought. She turned to stare at her husband.

"Jordan, would you sacrifice for Jordy? And Luz?"

"Sacrifice what?"

"Anything. Beginning with life itself."

"Let's not get dramatic, honey. I've had a hard day in the salt mines."

"But I mean—just suppose—for example, I mean—that Jordy should want to do something different, be something besides a Benedict of Reata. What would you say to that?"

"Jordy's going to be a cowman. I'm not going to live for ever."

"Yes, but suppose when he's eighteen or twenty he says he wants to be —oh, an engineer or a poet or a doctor or President of the United States or an actor or a lawyer."

"Well, he won't be."

"You don't mean you'd actually try to stop him!"

"The hell I wouldn't!"

CHAPTER 23

JORDY grew tall and slim. Jordy grew handsome and shy. Jordy was possessed of quiet charm and looked like his mother and walked in the footsteps of his father and loathed the daily deadly grinding business of roping and branding and castrating and feeding and breeding and line-riding and fence-building and dipping and shipping.

"I want you to know everything," Bick said again and again. "A Benedict ought to be able to do anything on Reata that any hand can do. I could, at your age."

In the choking dust the boy learned to cut out a calf a cow a steer from the vast herd. He would ride in among the bellowing animals, he handled his cutting horse with dexterity, zigzagging this way that way in pursuit of the desired quarry. Bick, mounted on his own horse, would stand watching nearby, immobile as an equestrian statue.

"Get that white-faced bone-yard. How did an esqueleto like that get in. . . . That runty red there. . . ." Grudgingly, at the end of a long burning day of grinding work he might say, "You did pretty well, son."

"Thanks, Papa." The boy did not raise his eyelids to look at his father. Leslie always said those long silky lashes were wasted on a boy. "Thanks, Papa." He looked down at his leather-bitten hands.

Leslie called Bick's attention to a little defect in speech that somehow seemed more pronounced as the boy grew older. At first it had seemed a childish trick, rather endearing. "Jordan, have you noticed that Jordy stutters quite a lot? Especially when he's upset."

"He'll outgrow it."

"But it's worse than it was. A real stammer."

"Lots of kids do that. Their ideas come faster than they can talk."

"Jordy isn't really a little boy any more. And Luz wears lip-stick as automatically as denims. Let's face it. They're almost grown-ups."

No one needed to say do-this do-that to Luz. She had taken to horses as other little girls demand dolls and lollipops. The Reata vaqueros worshipped her. In the non-Mexican line-house families she was as accustomed as their own members, she was as likely to be found eating with them as at home. To the Dietz family she was as casual as one of their own sons or daughters. From Bob Dietz, eleven years her senior, she unconsciously received a fundamental education in the sciences embracing soil, seeding, feeding, breeding. During his summer vacations from Texas University and, later, from Cornell, he worked as a matter of course on Reata. Whenever he permitted her Luz rode with him or drove with him, a wide-eyed child in pigtails, her mind absorbent as a thirsty desert plant. She was twelve. Fourteen. Fifteen.

Leslie took this up with her husband. "Jordan, Luz spends all her time with that Dietz boy."

"I wish Jordy did. Bob Dietz knows more about modern ranching than any man on the place. Of course, some of his ideas are cuckoo. I'm all for modern methods but some of this stuff they give them at college!"

"Yes, but I mean Luz isn't a child any more. Bob's a nice boy, and clever——"

"I'll tell you how clever I think he is. Some day that kid's going to be General Manager of Reata unless Jordy pulls up his socks and gets going. That would be a fine thing, wouldn't it! A Benedict just a kind of figure-head on Reata."

Luz, the outspoken, ranging the countryside in the saddle or at the wheel, came home with bits of gossip and information which she dispensed perhaps not as artlessly as one might think. Meal-time was frequently enlivened by her free-association chatter.

"They say Aunt Luz was always trying to keep people from getting married, she couldn't bear the thought They say Aunt Luz took to her bed with a fever so she wouldn't have to go to the wedding when you were married, and she actually did have a fever, isn't it wonderful! Of course in those days they didn't understand about psychosomatic illness. . . ."

Bick said angrily, "Who's been telling you this stuff?"

"Now Jordan!" came Leslie's voice, cool and calm. "Now Jordan, don't get upset over nonsense."

Like twin scenes in a somewhat clumsy comedy the boy and the girl privately confided each in the parent who was sympathetic.

"Look Mama," Jordy said, "I wish you'd speak to Papa."

"You're a big boy now, Jordy. Isn't it time you did your own speaking? And time you stopped this calling us Papa and Mama?"

"He says that's what he called his parents. When it comes to human beings everything has got to be done round here just as it was a hundred years ago. Reata without end, amen! Of course cattle that's different. It's no good my trying to talk to him. He behaves as if I were ten years old and feeble-minded."

Jordy's entire aspect changed when he talked to his mother. He was a man, assertive, rebellious, almost confident. In his father's company he dwindled to a timorous hesitant boy.

"What is it you want me to speak to him about?"

"Harvard. That's part of the old pattern. But it happens that that's what I want to do more than anything in the world."

"You do!"

"Yes. But not for his reason. They've got the best pre-med course in the country. And after that I want Columbia University—Physicians and Surgeons."

She stared at him. "You want to be a doctor."

"I'm going to be."

"Oh, Jordy! Your grandpa will be so happy to know——"

"Yeh, that's fine, but I don't want to slide along on his reputation. He's in all the encyclopædias and medical books and everybody knows about him. I don't want that. When I've finished I want to work right here in Texas. A Mexican with tuberculosis here hasn't got a chance. There's a Doctor Guerra in Vientecito he's got a clinic I'd give anything to——"

"Your father takes the most wonderful care of the people on Reata. You know that. Free medical attention and all that."

"Uh-huh. The cattle too."

"Your father will probably be delighted. You'll have use for all that medical knowledge here on Reata."

"I don't want to use it here on Reata. I want to be free to work where I want to work."

"Your father expects you to take his place some day." She must know if he was strong enough to reject this.

He stood up. "I'd die for Papa if it was a quick choice between his life and mine. But I won't live for him."

"He won't consent to it, Jordy. Even if we're both for it."

He saw, then, that she was with him. The boy's brooding face came alive.

"I haven't any money, Jordy. You know how it is on Reata. Millions, but nobody's got ready cash."

"Don't I know it!" Jordy agreed ruefully.

Quietly she said, "Uncle Bawley will do it if your father won't."

"Old Bawley! What makes you think so?"

"He will. I know."

Luz used the more direct approach in her talk with her father.

"I'm not going to Wellesley."

"What does your mother say to that?"

"She doesn't know."

"The Benedict girls always go to Wellesley."

"No girlie school for this one."

"Oh, I suppose Yale, huh? Or maybe Harvard with Jordy." He laughed at his own joke, not very heartily.

"You're warm. Cornell."

"You're crazy."

"You go to college to learn something. Cornell has got the really scientific husbandry course."

"You've got a little-girl crush on Bob Dietz. If he took a course in dressmaking in Paris that's probably what you'd want to do all of a sudden."

She faced him angrily. "You wouldn't say that to Jordy."

"Your mother says you've concentrated too much on cows already. She thinks a year or so in one of those schools in Switzerland."

Elaborately casual, Bick and Leslie approached the subject, each testing the other.

Bick began it.

"Know what Luz said? Of course she's too young to know what she really wants. But she said she won't go to Wellesley or even to that school in Switzerland you're so stuck on."

"What then?"

"Says—get this—says she wants to go to Cornell and take the husbandry course."

"No!" But even as she uttered this monosyllable of rejection she thought, Well, perhaps we can make a bargain. Perhaps now is the time to tell him.

"We've hatched a couple of odd fledglings, darling. Jordy says he wants to be a doctor."

Bick shrugged this off. "Over my dead body."

"I feel the same about Luz."

Almost warily they eyed each other like fighters in their corners. Then Bick said, "They're both too young to know what they're doing. One thing's sure. Jordy's going to run Reata. He's got to learn."

Jordy learned. He rode magnificently. He spent days and nights and weeks and months out on the range with the vaqueros, sleeping as they slept, eating as they ate.

Old Polo's family became as much a part of Jordy's life as his own. Polo's wrinkled wife gave Jordy strange unguents and weird brews to use when he had a cold or a fever (Leslie threw these out); Polo's handsome daughter-in-law fed him hot spicy Mexican dishes; Polo's pretty little granddaughter, Juana, one of a brood of eight, gazed at him adoringly, managing demurely to convey with her eyes what a proper young Mexican girl must not express in words.

Bick Benedict decided that the time had come for action. He would have a talk with Bob Dietz, the kid had finished at Cornell, he'd speak to him now. He called him at supper-time.

"Bob? . . . Bick Benedict. . . . Bob, I want to talk to you about something important. Jump into your car and come over here about eight."

But Bob Dietz, it seemed, was going to a Grange meeting. Somewhat

nettled, Bick said oh, the hell with that, you can go to a Grange meeting another time, this is important.

"I'm sorry," Bob said, "but I'm the speaker there this evening. I'm scheduled to talk on soil and crop rotation. I'd be glad to come tomorrow if that's all right with you."

Bob arrived before eight the next evening. Bick in his office heard his voice and Luz's laugh from the direction of the veranda, they seemed to have a lot to say to each other. Frowning, Bick came to the door. "Bob! Come on in here. I'm waiting for you."

Bick preceded him into the office, he motioned him to a chair, he sat back and looked at the young fellow, he thought, Golly that's a handsome hunk of kid.

There was rather an elaborate silence during which Bob Dietz did not seem ill at ease.

"You wondering why I sent for you, I suppose."

"Why, no, Mr. Benedict. Not especially."

"I'm going to come to the point. Reata may have dropped a million acres or so in the last fifty years but it's bigger than ever in more important ways. Our breeding and feeding programme is something I needn't tell you about. You know. This isn't just a ranch any more, it's a great big industrial plant, and run like one. It takes experts. I know about you—well say, I ought to—and I've checked up on you at Cornell. And what they say there is pretty hot."

Bob Dietz looked mildly pleased. He said nothing.

"I'm not getting any younger—that's what my wife calls a cliché——" Bick was a trifle startled to see Bob Dietz grin at this. "Anyway ten years from now this is going to be too much for me even with Jordy taking over a lot of it. I want to start you in now. From what I know about you, I'm not making a mistake. Soil. Irrigation. Breeding. Feeding. Crops. You know the works. My plan is, you start in next spring. I've got a ten-year plan and then another ten-year plan, and so on. At the end of ten years you'll be General Manager round here—under me and Jordy. At the end of another ten years—well, anyway, you're fixed for life. And good. Now don't tell me any more, when I call up, about how you have to go to a Grange meeting. Got it?"

"I think so, Mr. Benedict."

"You'll want to go home and talk this over with your folks. You ought to. So I don't expect you to say anything just now. You go along home and mull this over and we'll talk about it again."

"I know now," Bob Dietz said. "I couldn't do it."

"Couldn't do what?"

"A ten-year plan—a twenty-year plan—the rest of my life on Reata, like my father. I want a place of my own."

"You crazy kid! A place of your own. Do you imagine you'll ever have a ranch like Reata?"

"Oh, no sir! I wouldn't want it. I wouldn't have it for a gift. Heh, that doesn't sound good. I know the terrific stuff you've done here. I want a little piece of land of my own for experimentation. Never anything big. That's the whole point. Big stuff is old stuff now."

"Is that so!" Bick was stunned with anger. "So big is old-fashioned now, huh?"

"I didn't mean to be—I didn't go to make you angry, Mr. Benedict. I just mean that here in Texas maybe we've got into the habit of confusing bigness with greatness. Maybe they're not the same. Why at Cornell, in lab, they say there's a bunch of scientists here in the United States working on a thing so little you can't see it—a thing called the atom. It's a kind of secret but they say if they make it work—and I hope they can't—it could destroy the whole world, just like that. Bang."

As he left Luz must have been waiting to see him go. Sitting in his office, stunned, furious, Bick heard them talking and laughing together again. Then their voices grew fainter. To his own surprise he rushed out to stop them like a father in a movie comedy. They were just stepping into Bob Dietz's car.

"Luz! Where are you going?" Bick yelled.

"Down to Smitty's for a Coke."

"You stay home!" But they were off down the drive in the cool darkness. Leslie appeared from somewhere, she slipped her hand into his arm, she leaned against his shoulder. "Luz's almost a grown-up, darling. Girls of her age don't have to ask permission to go down to Smitty's for a Coke."

CHAPTER 24

"SOME DAY," Texas predicted, wagging its head in disapproval, but grinning, too, "some day that locoed Jett Rink is a-going to go too far. There's a limit to nonsense; even his."

Other men might conduct their lives outrageously but Jett Rink had become a living legend. Here was a twentieth-century Paul Bunyan striding the oil-soaked earth in hundred-dollar boots. His striding was done at the controls of an aeroplane or at the wheel of a Cadillac or on a golden palomino with tail and mane of silver.

A fabric made up of truth and myth was hung about his swaggering shoulders. Wherever men gathered to talk together there was a fresh tale to tell which they savoured even while they resented it.

"What became of that first woman he married? School-teacher, wasn't she? Imagine!"

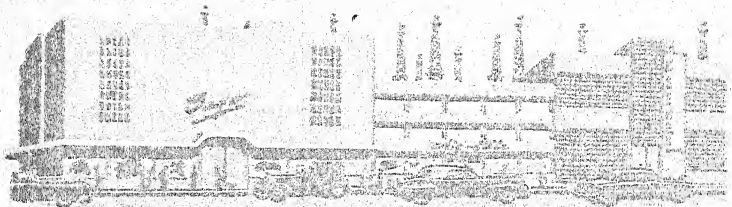
"Oh, that was a million years ago. He's had two others since then. Maybe three. Second one was a secretary of his, must have had something big on him."

"They say when he's really good and drunk he talks about that wife of Bick Benedict."

"He's a dirty liar! She's straight as they come. From up North, she is. But straight."

Sometimes he strode, very late, into one of the big city shops—Neiman's or Oppenheimer's or Gulick's—when they were about to close for the day. He liked to inconvenience them, he felt deep power-satisfaction in compelling the saleswomen and department heads to stay on after hours, serving him, Jett Rink. He liked his little joke, too. He would extend his hard paw to shake hands with a saleswoman of middle age, perhaps, with a soignée blue-grey coiffure and a disillusioned eye. As her thin hard-working hand met his she would recoil with a squawk of terror. In the great palm of his hand he had concealed a neat chunky steel-cold revolver.

As he lolled in the brocade bower that was a fitting-room they would



spread for his selection furs silks jewels. "This looks like you, Mr. Rink," they would say, fluffing out the misty folds of a cobweb garment. Or they were summoned to bring their wares to one of his ranches and there these would be displayed for him, an Oriental potentate in red-face. A mink coat. A sapphire. A vicuña top-coat for himself or a hunting rifle with a new trick.

SOCIETY

BY GLORIA ANN WICKER

Mrs. Jordan Benedict and daughter Luz are Hermoso visitors and shoppers this week. While in the city they are stopping at the Tejas Hotel. Miss Luz Benedict will spend a year or more at a select girls' school in Switzerland. There are other more interesting rumours which have not yet been confirmed.

Luz read this aloud to her mother as they sat at breakfast in their sitting-room at the Tejas. "What rumours, I wonder. And just how interesting. No girl ever had a duller summer."

"Reata's always good for a rumour," Leslie said, "when there's no news. Come on, dear, let's get started or we'll never cover this list."

Gulick's opulent windows reflected the firm's disdain for such whims as temperature time or place. Hot or cold, autumn was just round the corner. Gulick's window displays were aimed at those Texans who armed themselves early for a holiday in New York in California in Florida Europe Chicago or even that Yankee town Dallas. The lure of one window was too much even for shoppers like Leslie and Luz, bent on sterner stuffs. Wordlessly they stopped to gaze at it. Luxurious though every article was, each had the chaste quality of utter perfection.

The window held a woman's complete evening toilette. Nothing more. A fabulous fur wrap. A satin-and-tulle gown. Diamond necklace. A bracelet of clumped jewels. Long soft gloves flung carelessly on the floor like thick cream spilled on carpet. Cobwebs of lingerie. Wisps of hosiery. Fragile slippers. Jewel-encrusted handbag.

"Mm," said Luz.

"Nice," Leslie said.

As they stood there a hand slid through the arm of each, separating the two women. "Like it?" said a man's voice. "I'll buy the whole window for you, Leslie."

Leslie stared into Jett Rink's face.

Instinctively she jerked her arm to free it. His hand held it inescapably. He was smiling. Now, still holding the arms of the two women locked beneath his arms he turned his head slowly on that short thick neck to stare at the girl.

"You're Luz. I'm Jett Rink, Luz."

"Yes. I've seen pictures of you. Look, do you mind, you're just a little too hearty, you're hurting me."

"Luz. A hell of a thing to do to a pretty girl like you, name her after that old witch."

The arms of both women jerked to be free. He held them. He turned again to Leslie. "Am I hurting you too, Leslie?"

She thought, clearly. On Sonoro Street in Hermoso in front of Gulick's. Nothing must happen. Nothing to disgrace Jordan and the children. She spoke quietly.

"I'm not going to wrestle with you on the street. Take your hand away."

He swung them round as if in a dance, one on each side. "Would you wrestle in the car?" At the kerb was an incredibly long bright blue car. A man sat at the wheel, another stood at the back door. "Come on, girls. Let's take a ride."

It was unbelievable it was monstrous. For the first time she knew fear. He propelled them across the pavement.

"No!" Leslie cried. Faces of passers-by turned towards them, uncertainly.

Luz's free left hand was a fist. Now she actually twisted round to aim at his face but he jerked his head back, and he laughed a great roaring laugh and the passers-by, reassured, went on their way grinning at the little playful scuffle. "I'm not going to hurt you. Don't make such a fuss." He and the man standing at the car door half lifted half pulled them on to the deep roomy back seat, Jett between them. The door slammed, the man whirled into the front seat with the driver, the car shot into traffic.

Leslie looked at the monolithic faces of the two men in the front seat. "If you hurt Luz," Leslie said, her voice low and even, "you know perfectly well that no bodyguards can keep him from killing you." At the absurdity of this melodramatic statement she began to laugh somewhat hysterically.

"There you!" Jett turned triumphantly to Luz. "Your ma knows I was just fooling, I saw in the paper where you girls were in town and I been wanting to have a little talk with your ma. I been stuck on your ma for years. Did you know that?"

"I think you're a goon," Luz shouted.

Jett's voice took on an aggrieved tone. "There you go. Comes to a Benedict, no matter what I do, it's wrong. I was just kidding. I watched for you to come out of the Tejas. And then over to Gulick's and standing there looking in the window like a couple of little stenographers or something. Say, you don't have to tell me," he went on, easily, conversationally. "I know Bick's pinched for money all the time, that big damn fool place he thinks he runs. I'd buy you the whole Gulick set-up, Leslie, the whole ten floors and everything in it, if you say the word. I'm sick of buying stuff for myself. At first I got a bang out of it, but not any more. This Caddy's a special body and armoured, thirty thousand dollars."

"What are we going to do, Mama?" Luz said. Her voice was as quiet as her mother's had been, but its undertone was tremulous.

"It's all right, dearest," Leslie said. "It's his idea of a joke."

"I ain't joking, Leslie. I got to talk to you. Like I said."

Their speed never slowed, a huge building like a warehouse loomed ahead, a ten-foot metal fence enclosed it. In that instant before what seemed an inevitable crash the gates swung sharply open, the car tore

through without diminishing speed, the gates swung shut, the huge car stopped with a shriek of brakes. The man in front got out. He stood at the car door. Jett Rink was scribbling a note, holding the pad up close to his chest as he wrote. He tore it off, the man at the door took it. "You call them yourself. And tell them it's got to be there within half an hour or no deal. . . . Now then, girlies, I want to talk to your ma, Luz. Do you want to sit here in the car while we go and sit on the bench there in the shade? Or do you want to sit there and we'll stay in the car?"

Curiously, it was Luz who now took over. "We'll both get out or we'll both stay in. Or I'll begin to scream and while it probably won't do any good in this place I'll scream and scream and scream until——"

"Oh, all right." Wearily, as though agreeing to the whim of an unreasonable child, "It's hot, no matter where you sit. You go on over there, other side of the entrance. Your ma and I'll sit on that bench here, have our little talk. Either you girls want a Coke or something to drink?"

As Luz shook her head and walked away, Leslie looked up at the blank windows of the building. "What is this place?"

"It's nothing only a warehouse where I keep stuff, valuable stuff. I got places like this all round. First I was going to drive you out to the ranch, I got a place about an hour out. But a lot of folks out there all the time, visiting and all, I decided you wouldn't like that. I wouldn't want to do anything you wouldn't like—you and the kid."

She glanced at him but his face was serious. "I thought you were drunk. But you're not, are you?"

"I ain't had a drop for two days. Minute I knew you was in town I stopped. I knew I wanted a clear head."

Slim, almost boyish seated there beside her in his neat expensive clothes, a blue shirt, a polka-dot tie.

"Such silly behaviour. You've scared Luz to death, she didn't know you when you were a greasy kid on Reata. What is it? You want me to help you make friends again with Bick, or something like that, I suppose."

"You suppose. You suppose I don't know you're cleverer than that! You're the only really clever girl I ever knew. And that ain't all. Not. Quite. All." He had been smoking a cigarette. Now he tossed it away.

"Look I been crazy about you all these years. You know that well and good." He was talking carefully and reasonably as one would present a business argument or a political credo. "I tried everything to get rid of it. I had all the kinds there is. I even been married three four times. Did you know that?"

"I've never thought about it at all."

He dropped his tone of calm reasoning. The little twin dots of red flicked into the close-set hooded eyes. He leaned towards her. "I got to get rid of it. It's making me sick. Look at this." He held out his hand. "Look at that! Shakes like that all the time."

"That's alcohol and shot nerves and fear."

"Leslie. Leslie. Come with me. Leslie."

Equably, and quite conversationally as though exchanging chit-chat with a friend. "I'm really quite an old lady now, you know. You just think you're still talking to that rather attractive girl who came to Reata as a bride. . . . It's very hot here, Jett."

"Anything you'd want. Anything in the world. Bick wouldn't care. He don't care about anything only Reata."

She stood up. "All right, Luz!" she called. "We're going now."

He grasped her arm. "I'll go after Bick and you and your two kids. I swear to God I will. I'll never let up on all of you."

"You've been seeing too many Western movies."

She moved towards the car. The man sat up at the wheel. The second man came down the steps and towards the car.

"I ain't going," Jett said. "Luz, you sit up front there with him. Leslie, you get in the back here. You too, Dent. You call back here for me in ten minutes."

He stood there a moment in the brilliant sun.

"I'll do like I said," Jett called softly to Leslie, through the window.

"Where to?" asked the driver.

"Gulick's," Leslie said airily. "We have a great deal of shopping to do."

"No. Please." Luz did not look round. "I'd like to go to the hotel first. For a minute. I forgot something."

"Tejas," Leslie said then.

The gates opened.

Down the street at sickening speed. He has told them to kill us this way, Leslie thought. Then, reasonably, No they'd be killed too, so probably not. They stopped at the Tejas entrance. They were in the lobby, they were in the lift, they were in their rooms.

"I'm going to call up Papa."

"I wouldn't," Leslie said. "Not until we've talked a little first."

Luz was crying, quietly, her eyes wide open and the tears sliding unwiped down her face. "I was scared. I kept thinking I'd do something terrific and brave, but I was scared."

"So was I, dear."

Luz wiped her face now, she stood staring at her mother as at some new arresting object. "I think it's the most romantic thing I ever heard of! And I think he's kind of attractive."

"Don't say that. The man is a twisted——"

"The Synth twins say he's the fashion now, he's so tough he's considered chic. I must say I'm impressed with you, Mama, being the secret passion of that hard-boiled . . ." She had gone into her bedroom, her voice trailed off, then came up sharply: ". . . What in the world is all this! Mom! Come here!"

Boxes. Boxes and boxes and boxes. Stacked on beds and chairs. The smart distinctive blue-and-white striped Gulick boxes.

Miss Luz Benedict, the address slips read. Miss Luz Benedict. Miss Luz Benedict. Miss Luz Benedict.

She yanked at the cords. She opened a box. Another. Another. The fabulous fur wrap. The satin and tulle evening dress. The necklace. The slippers. . . . The window.

". . . Gulick?" Leslie at the telephone. "I want to talk to Mrs. Bakefield. . . . Mrs. Bakefield? Yes, Mrs. Jordan Benedict. There has been a mistake. We just came in—the Tejas—and there are a million packages that don't belong to us. It is just some terrible mistake. . . . Oh, Mrs. Bakefield! He must have seen some sort of mention in the newspaper. . . . No Oh, no, she doesn't even know him I hear he is very—well—eccentric now and then. . . . Just send for them . . . yes . . . now. . . ."

CHAPTER 25

A BENEDICT family meeting—a Benedict Big Business Pow-wow—was in progress. But this was not the regular annual Benedict family business assemblage. This was an unscheduled meeting called by the outraged members of the clan.

For the first time for a quarter of a century the Big House was cleared of all outside guests.

Uncle Bawley, oldest member of the clan, was presiding, but no one paid the slightest attention to him. These meetings were ordinarily conducted with parliamentary exactitude, everyone polite and gruesomely patient in spite of the emotions always seething beneath the ceremonial behaviour. But now the great chamber vibrated with heat and hate and contention.

Bick Benedict stood facing them all, and Bick Benedict shouted. "I won't have it. We're doing all right without oil. I won't have it stinking up my ranch."

"Your ranch!" yelled a dozen Benedicts. Then, variously, "That's good! Did you hear that! You're managing this place and getting your extra cut for it. Your ranch!" New York Chicago Buffalo California Florida Massachusetts Benedicts.

Leslie, sitting by, an outsider, thought, why don't they stay here and try running it for a change, the Horrors.

One of the more arrogant of the Benedicts, who dwelt on the East Coast, now dropped all pretence of courtesy.

"Just come down off it, will you, Bick? You're big stuff, I know, among the local Texas boys. But we happen to have an interest in this concern. And we've got the right to say by vote whether we want or don't want a little matter of five or ten million a year—and probably a lot more later—divided up among us. I don't know about the rest of you boys and girls, but me, I could use a little extra pin-money like that."

Stubbornly facing the lot of them, his face white beneath the tan, and set in new deep lines, Bick repeated the words he had used over and over again as though they presented a truth that made all argument useless.

"Reata is a cattle ranch. It's been a cattle ranch for a hundred years."

"That's just fine," drawled an unsentimental Benedict. "And there used to be thirteen states in the Union and the covered wagon was considered hot stuff."

Leslie saw with a sinking heart that the grey-white in Bick's face was changing to scarlet.

"Do you people know who wants the lease?"

"Yes, Teacher, we do. It's the Azabache Oil Company and a mighty pretty little outfit it is, too. I'm really sold on it."

"I'll bet you are. You've been away from Texas so long you've forgotten your Spanish. D'you know what Azabache means! It's Spanish for jet, if you want to know. And it doesn't mean just jet for black oil. It's jet for Jett Rink. Jett—Azabache. He controls most of it. And I won't have Jett Rink owning any piece of my country here on Reata——"

"All right all right. He's mean. Everybody knows that. We don't want to love him. We just want a nice thick slice of that billion he's got stashed away."

"He's got nothing but a lot of paper. He's in over his head. Everybody knows that Gabe Target could sell him down the river tomorrow if he wanted to."

Uncle Bawley banged his mesquite gavel. "I'm sorry, Jurden, but we got to put this to a vote. And what the vote says, goes. That's the law. That's the rule of this family and always has been. . . . Roady, pass those slips. . . . Bowie, you'll collect. . . . You all get out your big gold fountain pens and I hope they leak all over you for a bunch of stampeding maverick Benedicts. Now vote!"

The vote stood two to twenty-five.

That night Uncle Bawley took off for Holgado and the high clear mountain air. Within three days there was not one Benedict left in the cavernous walls of the Big House.

Leslie Benedict found herself in the fantastic position of a wife who tries to convince her husband that a few million dollars cannot injure him.

"You'll go on with your own work just the same. Better. It won't

affect the actual ranch. You'll be free of their complaints now, Jordan."

"Rink." Bitterness twisted his mouth as he spoke the name. "Jett Rink owning rights to Reata."

"He doesn't. He just holds a lease on a tiny bit of it. Besides you've told me yourself the Azabache Company isn't only Jett Rink. It's a lot of other people. Some of them people you know."

"He controls it."

"You'll never need to deal with him. Think of the things you can do now!" She paused a moment. "I don't mean only the things you're interested in. They're wonderful but I mean—couldn't we use some of it maybe for things like—necessary things, I mean, like new houses for the ranch people and perhaps the start of a good hospital and even a school where they're not separated—a school that isn't just Mexican or just—Oh, Jordan, how exciting that would be!"

"Uh-huh. You won't be so smug when you see Benedict swarming with a pack of greasy tool dressers and drillers and swamper and truckers. It's going to be hell. Pinky Synth was talking about it last night. Vashti's leased a piece of the Double B to Azabache."

"Well, there you are! You needn't feel so upset."

"The whole country's going to stink of oil. Do you know what else Pinky said? He and Vashti are talking of building in town—Viento or even Hermoso—moving to town and the family only coming out to the ranch week-ends and holidays. Like some damned Long Island set-up." The blue eyes were agate. "I've lived on Reata all my life. I'm going to live here till I die. Nothing on it is going to change."

"Everything in the world changes every minute."

"Reata's just going to improve. Not change."

Now the stink of oil hung heavy in the Texas air. It penetrated the houses the gardens the motor-cars the trains passing through towns and cities. It hung over the plains the desert the range; the Mexican shacks the Negro cabins. It haunted Reata. Giant rigs straddled the Gulf of Mexico waters. Platoons of metal and wood marched like Martians down the coast across the plateaux through the brush country. Only when you were soaring in an aeroplane 15,000 feet above the oil-soaked earth were

your nostrils free of it. Azabache Oil money poured into Reata. Reata produced two commodities for which the whole world was screaming. Beef. Oil. Beef. Oil. Only steel was lacking. Too bad we haven't got steel, Texas said. But then, after that Sunday morning in December even the voice of the most voracious was somewhat quieted.

With terrible suddenness young male faces vanished from the streets of Benedict. White faces black faces brown faces. Bob Dietz was off. The kids in the Red Front Market. Angel Obregon. High. Low. Rich. Poor. All became units in a new world of khaki.

Young Jordy Benedict, at Harvard was summoned home to Reata.

"You're needed here," Bick said tersely. "Beef to feed the world. That's the important thing."

"I can't stay here now."

"Yes, you will. Any one of ten million kids can sit at a desk in Washington. Or shoot a German. Producing beef here on Reata is the constructive patriotic thing for you to do."

"I'll go back to school. Or I'll be called up. I won't stay here."

"They won't take you. I can give them good reasons. And I won't send you a cent if you go back to Harvard."

The two men were talking in Bick's office. The boy quiet, pale. The older man glaring, red-faced.

Casually, Leslie strolled in and sat down.

Brusquely Bick said, "We're talking."

"I'm listening. I've been listening outside the door so I may as well come in." Jordy glanced at her and smiled a little. It made a startling change in the sombre young face. "Jordy, you look more like your Grandpa Lynnton every day."

As if this were a cue Jordy relaxed in his chair, his eyes as he looked at his father now were steady. "When I've finished at Harvard I'm going on to Columbia P. and S."

"P. and S.?" Bick repeated dully.

"Physicians and Surgeons. Medical school. We need doctors as much as beef. I haven't used any of the money you've sent me all this time. And thanks, Papa. Your money is all in the bank there in Boston waiting for you. I couldn't use it because you didn't know about me."

Bick Benedict turned with a curiously slow movement of his head to look at his wife. "Then you must have been sending him your money."

"Jordan dear, don't go on so. I haven't any money. You know that. It's Uncle Bawley. And I asked him. So don't blame him for it."

Slowly he said, "That old turtle."

Jordy stood up. "Papa, you know I never was any good round here. I never will be. Any man on Reata can do the job better than I ever could."

"That's right," Jordan said. "You never were any good. You never will be. You're all alike, you kids today, white and Mexican, you or Angel Obregon. No damn good."

"Angel's fine," Leslie said matter-of-factly. "I saw him today in Benedict, he looked wonderful in his uniform. Jordy, Angel's going to be married on Tuesday. Did you know that?"

"Yes. I'm staying for the wedding."

"Oh, you're staying for the wedding?" Bick repeated, cruelly mimicking his son just a little, even to the stammer. He picked up a sheaf of papers on his desk, shuffled them, put them down. "Doctor, h'm? New York, I suppose."

"Now Jordan!" Leslie protested. "You know Jordy loves Texas as much as you do. In another way, perhaps."

"You counting on putting old Doctor Tom out of business, maybe."

"I think I'm going to have a chance to work with Guerra in Vientecito when the war's over."

"Guerra! You don't mean—why, he's——"

"Ruben Guerra. His practice is all Mexican, of course. Uh—look. There's something else I'd like to talk to you and Mama about. I'm afraid you won't like this either."

"I've had about enough for just now," Bick said, and turned back to his desk and the aimless shuffling of papers. "Tell your life plans to your buddies, why don't you! Doctor Guerra——"

"He's busy in Europe just now."

"Well, Angel Obregon. Or Polo." He was racked with bitterness and disappointment.

"All right, Papa. I will."

CHAPTER 26

HALF Benedict and practically all Nopal were invited to the wedding. Angel was marrying Marita Rivas, one of the daughters of Dimodeo. Young Angel had furnished the trousseau according to custom. The importance of Marita's marriage would be gauged by the display of her gowns and her bridal dress, at the boda—the wedding feast.

"We'll have to go," Bick said heavily, grumpily. "Angel's son. It wouldn't look right if we didn't. I'm only going because of his father."

"Why Jordan, I wouldn't miss it! Angel! He was the first Reata baby I saw. The morning after I came here."

There was the bridal ceremony, full of pomp and ritual, and the bride in white satin with pearl beads and wax orange blossoms. The dress was later to be hung properly in the best room for all to see, and never to be worn again. A high platform had been built outside Dimodeo's house. After the church ceremony the bride appeared on this in each of the seven dresses of her bridal trousseau, so that all should see what a fine and open-handed husband her Angel Obregon was.

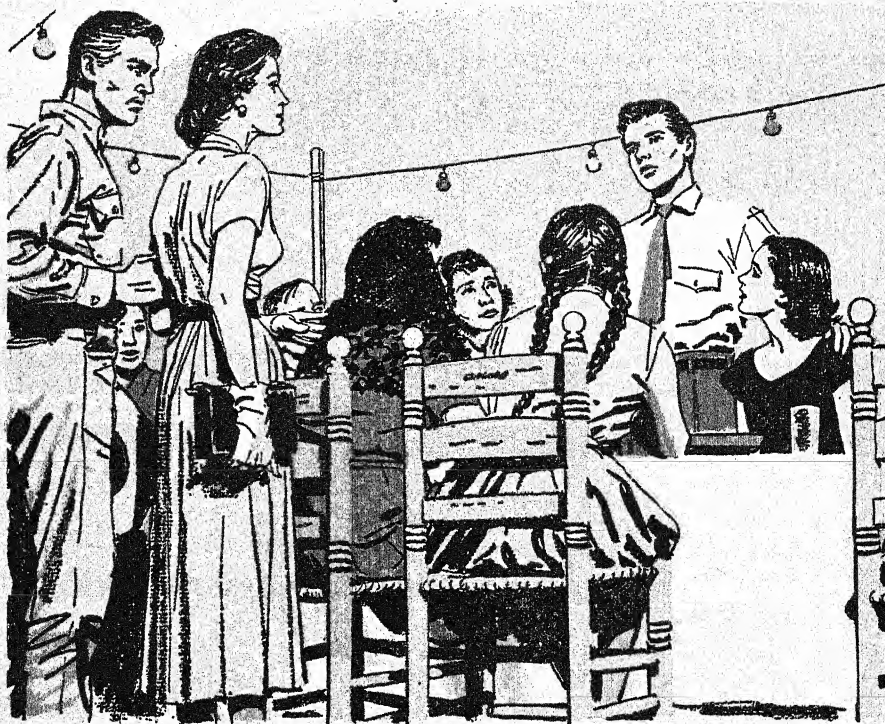
Leslie had seen all this before at many ranch weddings but she was as gay and exhilarated as though she never before had known the ceremony of the boda.

"This is the kind of thing I love about Texas. Everyone here and everyone happy and everyone neighbours. It's perfect." She squeezed Bick's arm, she smiled, she met a hundred outstretched hands.

"Look at Jordy! He's having a high time. I was afraid he'd feel—uh—that he would be upset, seeing Angel in uniform. Going, I mean, so soon. But look at him!"

"Mm." Bick stared down the long table at his son seated next to a pretty young Mexican girl and looking into her eyes. "He's being a shade too gallant, isn't he, to that little what's-her-name—Polo's granddaughter, isn't it?"

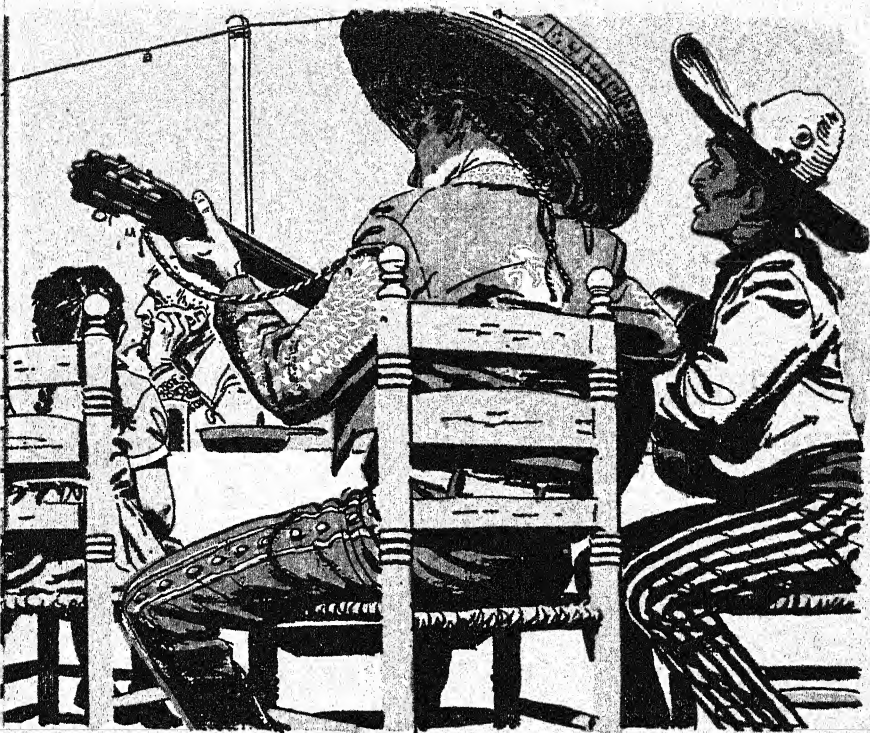
"Don't be feudal. She's a decent nice little girl and her name is Juana. Jordy's being polite and she loves it."



A fine feast. Barbecued beef and beans. The great wedding caque was the favourite feast cake called *color de rosa*. There was *pan de polvo*, little round cakes with a hole in the middle, shaped with the hand, delectably sugary and grainy. There were *buñuelos*, rolled paper-thin and big as the big frying-pan in which they had hissed in deep fat. Delicious with the strong hot coffee. There was beer, there was tequila, there was mescal.

The music of the guitarras grew louder, more resonant. "Come along home now, honey," Bick said. "We can go now. I've had enough of this and so have you."

He rose from the crowded table, and Leslie with him. Angel, the



bridegroom, and Marita, the bride, seeing their guests of honour about to leave started towards them in smiling farewell.

It was then that Jordy Benedict stood up, too, and to the amazement of the wedding guests he put his arm about the girl Juana's shoulder. He was very pale and his dark eyes seemed enormous.

He spoke formally in Spanish. "Ladies and gentlemen! My mother and my father! Friends! I have not spoken until now because I did not want to intrude on the festivities of this wedding of my friends Angel Obregon and Marita Rivas. But now I can tell you that yesterday morning Juana and I were married in the rectory of the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Nopal. We are husband and wife."

He spoke without his usual stammer. No one noticed this. Though perhaps somewhere in his mother's stunned mind it registered.

CHAPTER 27

SPRAWLED comfortably on a veranda chair, Bick was deep in talk with Judge Whiteside and Gabe Target and Pinky Snyth and Uncle Bawley. Cattle, oil, politics were the primary subjects of discussion as always in a group of Texas males.

"My family and I live just as we've always lived here at Reata. All that black grease over on the edge," Bick said contemptuously, "hasn't made a mite of difference. We live plainer, in fact. Look at the Big House where I was brought up, compared to this little shack."

"That's right," Pinky Snyth agreed. A gleam of malice danced in the seemingly guileless blue eyes. "Just like in the old-timey days, that's you, Bick. God sure was good to you Benedicts to hand you a seventy-five-foot reinforced-concrete swimming-pool set down in the brush right in your own front yard."

Bick good-humouredly joined in the laughter. "Well, now, it's a health measure. Leslie's in and out like a seal. And the young folks. We'd have had that pool in time, oil or no oil."

Gabe Target was a realist. "Like hell you would! That twenty-seven and a half per cent exemption on oil fetched all the little knickknacks round your country here like swimming-pools and aeroplanes and Caddys and whole herds of fifty-thousand-dollar critters. And that goes for the rest of the state, too."

There was the sound of light laughter from the shadow of the vines at the rear of the veranda. The heads of the four men turned sharply. "That you, Leslie?" Bick called.

Her voice, a lovely sound, came to them though they could not see her. "I get starved for male conversation. I'm in the harem section pretending not to be here."

"Whyn't you move down here where we can look at your pretty face, not only hear you?" suggested that ancient charmer, Uncle Bawley.

She came out of the vine shadows then and stood a moment, waving

them back to their chairs. "No, I'm not staying. I'm off." Her voice was gay but her eyes were serious. Straight and slim as she had been more than twenty years ago. A misting of white in the abundant black of her hair. "Luz and I are driving Juana and Little Jordan over to Bob Dietz's new place. Bob's got a new lamb to show Jordan, he's never seen a lamb."

"Dietz's place," Bick said, and shuffled his feet a little. "That's a far piece for the kid to go, day like this."

"He's tough."

Bick's frown cleared and he wagged his head. "He sure is. I sat him up front of me on my horse yesterday, just to see what he'd do, and when I took him down he began to bellow to be put back up again. Kicked me."

"Well, real Mexican——" Pinky began. Then he stopped abruptly.

Brightly, but looking them over with a clear cool gaze, Leslie said her polite farewells. "I'll be back by six. You know the way Luz drives. Won't you stay for supper? And tell me what you've talked about while I'm away. If you dare. Just what are you five evil men up to now, I wonder? And don't you know you'll have to pay for it in the end?"

She vanished into the house.

The five men looked at each other.

"Leslie's always been real sharp talking," Judge Whiteside said, and his tone was not altogether admiring.

Uneasily Bick dismissed the criticism. "Leslie doesn't mean it. When she gets going I just come back at her with some mild questions about the South and Tammany in New York and a few things like that."

The men sat quietly for a moment, the humming metallic sounds of Reata Ranch coming to them on the hot Gulf wind. Then Gabe Target began to talk in his calm low tones. "Now boys, this is very pleasant, sitting here gabbing in the hot of the day. But this isn't what I came down for. You want to state your situation, Bick?"

Bick Benedict hunched forward, his hands clasped in front of him. "Here it is, straight. We didn't realize, when we let out the oil leases, how many oil workers were going to swarm in on Reata. There's a mob of them. I've got nothing against them, big husky fellows, work hard and spend their money. At first it was work and sleep and eat and live

in those shacks just anyhow. But now they've got together in a bunch called The Better Living Association."

"How many of them?" Gabe Target asked.

"Oh, good many hundreds by now. Swarming all over the town and county."

"Dissident votes," Pinky Snyth announced, like a checker of lists. "Right in this precinct."

"They're yelling all over the district they want what they call decent schools for their kids and a hospital for the sick and injured and so on, and homes for their families. And the oil property—about a hundred and fifty thousand acres of it—is in my precinct here. In the town of Benedict. If they vote and carry it—and they will the way it stands now—they don't want my—the old Commissioner. They want him voted out and a new Commissioner in. There'll be a new tax rate on every acre of land hereabouts. That tax on a couple of million acres can just about cripple Reata. They win, and it'll spread to your Double B, Pinky. And you know it."

He unclasped his hands, threw them open, palms up. The lines in his forehead were deep, the eyes strained.

Judge Whiteside cleared his throat. "You talked to the Azabache crowd about this, Bick?"

"What do they care! It doesn't affect them. They said Jett Rink heard of it, he laughed his crazy fat head off."

Silence. The hot wind rustling the vine leaves. The drum of a powerful motor somewhere far off on the prairie.

Smoothly, benevolently, Gabe Target broke the silence. "Well now, Bick, we don't want anything that isn't perfectly legal and above-board, of course."

"Course," the four echoed, and their eyes never left his face.

Silence again, brief, breathless. "I suggest—and of course I'd want the sound legal opinion of our good friend the Judge here—I suggest a very simple feasible plan, Bick. Now first I'd like to ask you a couple of questions."

Pompous old fool, Bick's inner voice yelled. Aloud, "All right, Chief. Shoot."

"Plainly speaking, the County Commissioner's your man. That right?"

"Right."

"The Mexicans on your place—vaqueros and so on—they vote right?"

"They vote—right."

"All of them?"

"Yes."

"I heard some of the younger Mexican fellas since the war's over they've come home and haven't settled down properly, they've been rabble-rousing, shooting their mouths off, getting together saying they're American citizens without rights and that kind of stuff. Can you handle them?"

"I can handle them. Always have. They'll quiet down."

"The full vote is needed to carry your candidate. Am I correct? Without it, he's out?"

"Out."

Gabe Target's eyes were flat discs of steel sunk in the caverns below his fatherly brow. "Well, my boy, you don't want a crowded big noisy city sprung up round this beautiful Reata——"

Judge Whiteside intoned, "As fair a piece of Nature's bounty——"

Bick held his temper by an effort. "Let's just hear Gabe out, will you? This is pretty important. I know a few millions don't matter much any more in Texas. But Reata matters to me more than anything in the world."

Pinky thought, By gosh he means it. More than anything in the world.

Gabe was talking in that quiet reasonable voice so that everything he said sounded plausible and right and somehow beneficent.

"That's a mighty fine sentiment, son, and it does you credit as a real Benedict and Texian. Now then. These boys in the big oil outfits, they ought to have their own town. They've earned it. Hard-working boys. And keep Benedict the way it is, population and lay-out and nice little town government and all. And taxes. The same. Just have the precinct lines rearranged and the town line set to where it was before oil. B. O. There's a big enough population sprung up there outside to make a fine little town of their own, the oil crowd and their wives and all. Get 'em

incorporated, all fair and above-board—before they know where they're at. Town line. Board. Commissioner. Everything in good order. They could call the town Azabache. Or town of Jett Rink. And leave him build the schools they're bawling for, and the hospitals and the city hall and all. And let Jett Rink pay the taxes."

Silence. Gabe Target's eyelids came down over the flinty eyes, giving him that aspect of benevolence again.

Finally Bick spoke. "You really think it can be done?"

"Judge Whiteside here will bear me out I think. Won't you, Judge? Bick wants to know if it can be done."

Judge Whiteside cleared his throat. His voice had the finality of one who is the Law. "It's as good as done this minute. You can forget it."

"Little drink would go good," Pinky suggested.

Everything had been conducted in the approved fashion. Like the concocting of a well-made Texas barbecue sandwich. The preliminary conversational chit-chat was the blandly buttered under slice of bread. Then the quick hot spiced filling of meat and burning sauce. And now the layer of pleasant aimless talk again.

The top slice of bread.

CHAPTER 28

EVEN after all these years Leslie Benedict always felt a distinct shock as she came out of the dim cool rooms of the Main House to meet the full blast of the Texas sun. The Big House hummed with air conditioners but here at the Main House the family relied on the massive old walls for protection. Leslie had often suggested a cooling unit for Bick's bedroom but he said he'd as soon sleep with a woman who snored as that thing. He even refused to have one in his office.

Now Luz and Leslie in the front seat, Juana and little Jordan in the back, the four were off for Bob Dietz's ranch in the Valley.

Leslie cast an anxious eye towards the child. "It'll be cooler as soon as we begin to move. Juana, you don't think it's going to be too much for Polo, do you?"

Juana glanced down at the child beside her. "He loves it. He was so

excited this morning he wouldn't eat his breakfast." Juana's English was spoken with precision. Her voice was soft and low and leisurely, unlike the strident tone of many Mexican-American women. Old Polo stemmed from Spanish blood and his granddaughter's skin had a creamy pallor, the dark eyes were soft and the black hair was fine and abundant. But the child Polo had the *café-au-lait* colouring of his Mexican grandmother and great-grandmother; and their Mexican hair and eyes.

Now the car rounded the curve in the long driveway and passed the Big House. Three or four people were descending the broad stone steps and there were cars waiting in the drive. Almost automatically Leslie waved and smiled, though she knew only vaguely who the guests were this week or this particular day.

"It seems to me," Luz remarked, "that our visiting strangers get stranger and stranger. Who's that lot?"

"I don't know, really. Not very important. Two of the boys have been delegated to take them round. But next week!"

"I hear it's a king and queen. Doesn't it sound silly!"

"Yes, poor darlings. And a swarm of other people. It's a weird list. Somebody must have slipped up on it—Jordan's secretary or somebody. They can't all be interested in cattle."

"Who?"

"You won't believe it, even for Reata. Uh, let's see—there's a prize fighter and a Russian dancer and a South American Ambassador. And a movie queen who's bought a ranch in California and wants to stock it. And her husband. And I'm afraid your Aunt Maudie and your Aunt Leigh are descending."

"I may suddenly be called away."

"Now, Luz! Anyway, they're all invited to that big thing at Jett Rink's new airport."

"Oh, that! I may hop over for a look at it but I wouldn't be found dead at the idiotic howling dinner."

"Your father would like you just to show up, and Jordy, too."

"That's ridiculous! What for?"

"Because everybody is going to be there, and if we stay away it will look queer. He doesn't like it any better than you do."

They had whirled through the streets of Benedict. The old main street had become a business section that branched in all directions. Plate-glass windows reflected, glitter for glitter, the dazzling aluminium and white enamel objects within. Vast refrigerators, protean washing machines, the most acquisitive of vacuum cleaners. There were fixed-price stores and all day long in these stores mechanical music droned whining tunes sung by a bereft crooner.

The moth-eaten Longhorn steer still stood in his glass case morosely staring out at the procession of motor-cars streaming along the road which in his lifetime had known only the quick clatter of horses' hoofs and the bellow and shuffle and thud of moving cattle.

As the Benedict car flashed through the town and out Leslie's quick glance darted this way and that. "How it changes! Almost from day to day. You should have seen it when I came here a bride, before any of you were born."

"Well, I hope so, madam!" Luz exclaimed virtuously.

"That first week! I'll never forget it. I rejected just about everything—except your father. The—the vaqueros' horrible little shacks were worse than the Negro cabins in my Virginia. Texas food was steak and the steak was sole leather."

"Still is," Luz observed.

"But not at our house. And there are all those modern houses in the barrios now. And they're talking about a new hospital here in Benedict and a new school."

Juana's voice was very low, for the child had fallen asleep against his mother's side. "The school for the Latin American children is a disgrace."

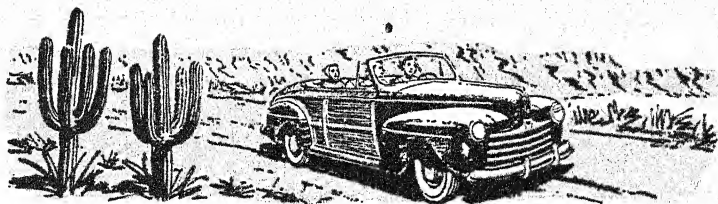
Leslie turned in her seat to face her daughter-in-law. "I know, Juana darling. We must keep on working."

Presently Leslie asked Luz, "Tell me, what's Bob's new house like? Is it attractive?"

"Attractive as a goods wagon. You could put the whole thing in our pantry."

"Modern pioneer, h'm?"

"You and Pa are a little worried about Bob Dietz, aren't you?"



"Well, no, not worried. I think he's a wonderful young man. I don't suppose you plan to marry every man who interests you."

"No. Only one. Bob and I have talked about it. He says he wouldn't marry any girl who has Reata hung round her neck." The girl's voice was even and her eyes were on the road ahead but something intangible asked mutely for guidance.

"Your Aunt Luz, that you were called after, thought that Reata was more important than marriage. When she was young, she was in love with Cliff Hake—that was Vashti Synth's father—and he was in love with her. But he wouldn't come to live at Reata and she wouldn't go to live at the Double B, and they wouldn't throw the two ranches into one. So she lived at Reata an old maid. And died there."

"I'm still young," Luz said, her voice airy, "even if I am over twenty. Young in spirit, that's me. . . . I danced with Jett Rink the other night."

"No, Luz!"

"It was only for a minute or two. He was drunk but not violent. It was last week when I went to Houston for the party. We were having dinner at the Shamrock, Glenn McCarthy came into the Emerald Room with a bunch of Big Boys and Jett Rink was one of them. He looked quite handsome in a kind of way. He had the nerve to come up to our table and ask me to dance. I decided it would be better to try it than to risk his going into one of his slugging matches with one of our men."

"What did he say?"

"Sort of babbled. Still mad at the Benedicts but not you and not me, as nearly as I could gather. A lot about you. And then he suggested it would be nice if I'd marry him. What an ape!"

"I'm hungry!" Little Polo was wide awake now.

Leslie reassured him. "All right, my precious. We'll stop somewhere."

"I want my breakfast," the boy demanded.

Luz called back, "Juana, there's a nice clean new place about a mile farther on. Bob and I stopped there for a sandwich the other night. They toast them. Quite good. I could do with a Coke, myself."

There were a dozen cars outside the little roadside lunch-room. A radio whined. Lorries and passenger cars and jeeps mingled affably in the parking place. "You go along in," Luz said. "I'll park away from these bloodthirsty lorries." Leslie took the boy's hand in hers as he walked with his uncertain staggering steps. He looked proudly up into her face. She loved the feel of the velvety morsel in her palm. "Now, my pet. We'll all have something good, but not much because Bob Dietz will want us to eat lunch at his house."

"Won't he let me see the little lamb?"

"Oh yes, he'll let you see the lamb. Now then. Up the little step."

They stood for a moment, Leslie, Juana, the child, in the bright steamy room with its odours of coffee and fried food. "That table in the corner," Juana suggested. "Perhaps there is a high chair for you, *mi vida*."

"I don't want a high chair. I am a big boy."

They sat down. "What's keeping Luz?" Leslie said, and tucked in a paper napkin at Polo's neck which he at once removed.

"We don't serve Mexicans here."

They did not at first hear. Or, if they heard, the words did not penetrate their consciousness. So now the man came from behind the cash register and moved towards them. His voice was louder now. "We don't serve Mexicans here."

Leslie Benedict stared round the room, but the man was looking at her and at Juana and at Polo. Leslie was frowning a little, as though puzzled. "What?"

"You heard me." He jerked a thumb towards the doorway. "Out." The men drinking coffee at the counter and the people at the nearby tables looked at the two women and the child. They kept on eating and drinking, though they looked at them and glanced with sideways glances at each other.

Leslie rose. Juana stood, too, and the child wriggled off the chair and ran to his mother's side. "You can't be talking to me!" Leslie said.

"I sure can. I'm talking to all of you. Our rule here is no Mexicans served and I don't want no rumpus."

The worried-looking woman behind the lunch counter said, "Now Floyd, don't you go getting techy again. They ain't doing nothing."

Leslie felt her lips strangely stiff. She said, "You must—be out of your mind."

"Who you talking to?" the man yelled.

Luz came blithely in, she stared a moment at the little group on whose faces was written burning anger; at the open-mouthed men and women at the counter and tables.

"Heh, what's going on here!" she said.

The man glanced at the golden-haired blue-eyed girl, he pointed a finger at the two women and the child, but Leslie spoke before he could repeat the words.

"This man won't serve us. He says he won't serve Mexicans."

The scarlet surged up into Luz's face, her eyes were a blazing blue. Leslie thought, with some little portion of her brain that was not numb, Why she looks exactly—but exactly—like Jordan when he is furious.

"Git!" shouted the man. "You and your greasers."

Luz reverted then to childhood.

"I'll tell my father! He'll kill you! Do you know who my father is! He's——"

"No! No, Luz! No name. Come."

As they went they heard, through the open doorway, the voices of the man and the woman behind the counter raised again in dispute.

"You crazy, Floyd! Only the kid and his ma was cholos. . ."

"Aw, you can't fool me."

Leslie put a hand through Juana's arm, she took the child's hand in hers.

"Come, children. Sh! Don't cry!"

"That is a bad man," Polo said through his sobs.

"Yes, darling."

"I am hungry I want my breakfast."

They were climbing into the car now. "Grandma will sit back here with you. That man didn't have nice milk to drink. Luz will get out at

the next place and she'll get you a bottle of milk and some biscuits and you can drink the milk through a straw as we ride along and you can see the little lamb all the sooner. Won't that be fun!"

CHAPTER 29

SHE HAD their promise. All the way to Bob Dietz's ranch and all the way back they had argued. But in the end Luz and Juana had promised.

"Please," Leslie had implored them, "please not until after that horrible Jett Rink party is over. Please Luz, please Juana, don't tell your father don't tell Jordy don't tell Bob until after that. You know they'd do something—something hasty, it would get into the papers, it would be all over the state. All those guests at the Big House, and a thousand people going to the party. There'll be publicity enough. Please just wait until next week, then we'll all talk about it quietly, together."

"Quietly!" shouted Luz. "I'm going to tell Bob the minute we hit the house. He'll kill that baboon."

"Luz, I promise you it won't be left like this. I promise. But it can't be now. This is the wrong time. We're furious because of what that ignorant bigot did. But we all know this has been going on for years and years. It's always happened to other people. Now it's happened to us. The Benedicts of Reata. So we're screaming."

"All right," Luz snapped, "then let's hit it."

"Yes. But not now. Please. Not just now. It's the worst possible time to make a public fuss."

And deep inside her a taunting voice said, Oh, so now you're doing it too, h'm? After twenty-five years of nagging and preaching and being so superior you're evading, too. Infected. Afraid to speak up and act and defy. Hit the rattlesnake before it strikes again. Tell them now, tell them now, what does it matter about the silly guests, and the talk. It's the world that matters.

At six that evening Bick Benedict, sprawled on the couch in their bedroom, regarded his wife with the fond disillusioned gaze of the husband who is conditioned to seeing cold cream applied to the wind-

burned feminine face. "What the hell went on down there at Bob Dietz's?" he inquired. "You girls came home behaving as if you'd been scalped by Karankawas. Juana looked as if she'd been crying and Luz stamped past me without speaking. Just glared. Did the two girls quarrel or something? What happened, anyway?"

"Nothing," Leslie replied. "Just tired, I guess."

"Uh-huh. All right, keep your girlish secrets. You don't look so good yourself, by the way."

Leslie continued to pat the cold cream on her cheeks. "Thanks, chum. There's nothing like a little flattery to set a girl up before dinner."

Tell him now, the Voice said. Tell him his wife and his daughter and his daughter-in-law and his grandson were kicked out of a roadside diner and it's his fault and your fault and the fault of every man and woman like you. But she only said, aloud, "We brought the little lamb back with us in the car. Bob gave it to Polo."

"You trying to make a sheep man out of a Benedict! Don't let that get round the cow country."

"He insists on keeping it in a box in his bedroom. Juana's having quite a time."

"What's Dietz's place like?" he asked.

"Compact as a hairbrush. You wouldn't know it was Texas. Everything planned to the last inch like a problem in physics. It's planted right up to the front door, I expected to see grass growing in the house."

"Did, huh? See his stock?"

"Yes. Some. It looked—what's the word?—thrifty. Bob said it was solid beef cattle, he wasn't going in for collectors' items."

"Impudent kid."

"Let's be fair. Bob's more than that. Jordan, maybe this boy has got hold of something so fundamental that it's enormous."

"You sound as if you'd been talking to your daughter Luz. I want to know what you think of him."

"Bob's a fine man. And more than just clever. For the rest, perhaps he's just a le-e-etle bit too earnest for my taste, and not enough humour. But maybe that's the mark of future greatness. Great men are usually pretty stuffy. Except you."

A Mexican girl came in with a tray and placed it on the table beside him. Bick opened the bourbon, cocked an eyebrow at Leslie, she nodded.

"That's mighty pretty talk, missy." But he was not smiling. "Look. Is she going to marry him?"

"I don't know. Neither does she. He won't marry Reata. I'm sure of that. Not even if he has to lose Luz. And he's crazy about her."

"She doesn't want to marry that farmer. Anyway, she isn't going to. Not if I can help it."

"Twentieth century. Remember?"

Moodily he stared at her. "Oh, let's forget it. I'm tired. This has been a stinker of a day, and besides, I got to thinking about this damned Rink affair next week. Bawley said he wouldn't be seen dead there, oil or no oil. And to tell you the truth I'd rather be shot than go."

"That's wonderful! We won't go."

His shoulders slumped. "We've got to. If we stay away we'll be the only outfit for a thousand miles around that isn't there. Everybody's going and nobody wants to—nobody that is anybody. Stay away and we'd be more marked than if we went to the party naked. . . . To think that that cochino could make decent people do anything they don't want to do!"

"He can't. We don't have to go." She faced him squarely, hairbrush in hand, gesticulating as she spoke. "You keep on doing—we keep on doing things we're really opposed to. You just can't keep on doing things against your feelings and principles."

Belligerently, "You don't say! What things?"

"You've just said it. This hideous kow-towing to a thing like Jett Rink. But that isn't so important. It's a thousand other things. Oil. And the ranch. And the Mexicans. The bigotry. The things that can happen to decent people. It's going to catch up with you. It's taken a hundred years and maybe it'll take another hundred. But it will catch up with you. With everybody. It always does."

"Go and join a club," he said wearily, and turned away from her and threw himself again on the couch.

She came over to him and sat beside him. "Bick, do you feel ill?"

He stared at her. "You called me Bick."

"Did I?"

"Why?"

"I don't know, Jordan. I didn't know I had."

"You've never called me that before. Never. Everybody else did, but you've never called me anything but my name, since the day we met. Say, that's kind of funny. Maybe it means you've kind of finished with your husband Jordan."

She sank down against him, her cheek against his, her arm across his breast. "Jordan's my husband, darling. Bick's my friend."

"Tell your friend to get the hell out of my wife's bedroom." But he was not smiling. He lay inert, unresponsive to her. After a moment he began to talk disjointedly, as though unwillingly admitting the doubts and fears that for months had been piling up against the door of his consciousness. "I guess it's kind of got me . . . the Boys this afternoon . . . and the whole damned oil crowd . . . it's like any dirty boom town now, Benedict is. . . And on top of everything Jordy turning out a no-good maverick. . . . Oh well, no real Benedict, anyway. . . . Doctor Jordan Benedict! Can you imagine! Down in Spigtown with the greasers in Vientecito, a name-plate on the door right beside a fellow named Guerra. . . . Juana and the kid. . . . Juana's all right she's a decent girl she's Jordy's wife Jordy Benedict's wife and the kid looks like a real cholo. . . ."

"Darling, don't say things like that! They're terrible. They're wrong. You don't know how wrong. You'll be sorry."

"Yeh, well I know this much. Things are getting away from me. Kind of slipping from under me, like a loose saddle. I swear to God I sometimes feel like a failure. Bick Benedict a failure. The whole Benedict family a failure."

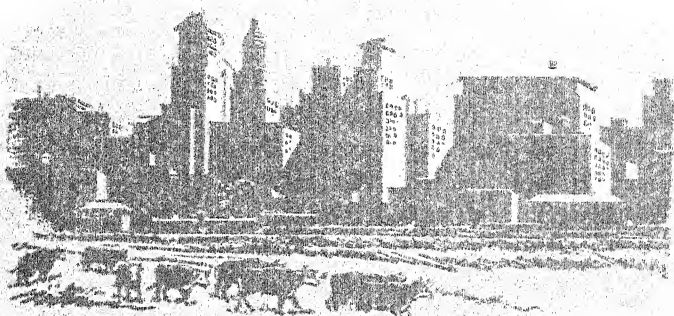
She sat up very straight, she took his inert hand in hers, his brown iron hand, and held it close to her. "Jordan, how strange that you should say that just today!"

"Today?"

"Because today was kind of difficult for me too, in some ways. And I thought, as we were driving along towards home—Luz and Juana and

little Jordan and I—I thought to myself, well, maybe Jordan and I and all the others behind us have been failures, in a way. In a way, darling. In a way that has nothing to do with ranches and oil and millions and Rinks and Whitesides and Kashmirs. And then I thought about our Jordan and our Luz and I said to myself, well, after a hundred years it looks as if the Benedict family is going to be a real success at last.”

As he turned, half startled half resentful, to stare at her, the man saw for just that moment a curious transformation in the face of this middle-aged woman. The lines that the years had wrought were wiped away by a magic hand, and there shone there the look of purity, of hope and of eager expectancy that the face of the young girl had worn when she had come, twenty-five years ago, a bride to Texas.





Edna Ferber

EDNA FERBER was born in Michigan, the daughter of a struggling shopkeeper. Her first ambition was to go on the stage, but when her father became blind, she began work as a reporter on a local paper. Later she moved on to bigger and better jobs with newspapers in Milwaukee and Chicago, and tried her hand at novel-writing. She discarded her first book, but it was rescued by her mother, and eventually sold 10,000 copies.

During the following years she wrote many short stories and a number of novels, including the Pulitzer Prize winner, *So Big*, and *Show Boat*, which through its fabulous career as a musical show and as a film became one of Edna Ferber's most widely known, best-loved stories.

Her novels, set in many parts of America, bear witness to the fact that she has travelled widely in her own country. *Giant* is her eleventh novel, and in writing it she spent much time in Texas, a state she describes as "exhilarating, exasperating, violent, charming, horrible, delightful, alive."

Miss Ferber now lives in New York City, but still spends much of her time travelling.

Decorations by Lyle Justis

Cry, the Beloved Country

A condensation of the book

by

ALAN PATON



"Cry, the Beloved Country" is published by Jonathan Cape, London



IN this story of a simple African parson's search for his erring son, thousands of readers have found an unforgettable quality of truth and inspiration. With swift pace and almost Biblical eloquence the powerful narrative moves from semi-primitive tribal life in the green hills of Natal to the Shanty Town warrens of Johannesburg's slums, breeding ground of racial tensions and violent crime.

Following remarkable critical acclaim, *Cry, the Beloved Country* has already won its rightful place as a modern classic.

"An absorbing and deeply moving experience."

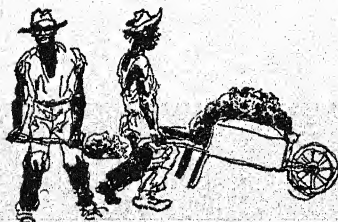
—*The Observer*

"Moments of beauty . . . lift its simple prose above the level of mere narrative, and proclaim it a work of art."

—Francis Brett Young in
The Sunday Times

"An impressive, absorbing story."

—Major Lewis Hastings on the B.B.C.



THERE IS a lovely road that runs from Ixopo into the hills. These hills are grass-covered and rolling, and they are lovely beyond any singing of it. The road climbs seven miles into them, to Carisbrooke; and from there you look down on one of the fairest valleys of Africa. About you there is grass and bracken and you may hear the forlorn crying of the titihoya, one of the birds of the veld. Below you is the valley of the Umzimkulu, on its journey from the Drakensburg to the sea; and beyond and behind the river, great hill after great hill; and beyond and behind them, the mountains of Ingeli and East Griqualand.

The grass is rich and matted, you cannot see the soil. It holds the rain and the mist, and they seep into the ground, feeding the streams in every kloof. It is well-tended, and not too many cattle feed upon it; not too many fires burn it, laying bare the soil. Stand unshod upon it, for the ground is holy, being even as it came from the Creator. Keep it, guard it, care for it, for it keeps men, guards men, cares for men. Destroy it and man is destroyed.

Where you stand the grass is rich and matted, you cannot see the soil. But the rich green hills break down. They fall to the valley below, and falling, change their nature. For they grow red and bare; they cannot hold the rain and mist, and the streams are dry in the kloofs. Too many cattle feed upon the grass, and too many fires have burned it. Stand shod upon it, for it is coarse and sharp, and the stones cut under the feet. It is not kept, or guarded, or cared for, it no longer keeps men, guards men, cares for men. The titihoya does not cry here any more.

The great red hills stand desolate, and the earth has torn away like flesh. The lightning flashes over them, the clouds pour down upon them, the dead streams come to life, full of the red blood of the earth. Down in the valleys women scratch the soil that is left, and the maize hardly reaches the height of a man.

They are valleys of old men and old women, of mothers and children. The men are away, the young men and the girls are away. The soil cannot keep them any more.

THE SMALL child ran importantly to the wood-and-iron church with the letter in her hand. Next to the church was a house and she knocked timidly on the door. The Reverend Stephen Kumalo looked up from the table where he was writing, and he called, Come in.

The small child opened the door, carefully, like one who is afraid to open carelessly the door of so important a house, and stepped timidly in.

—I bring a letter, umfundisi.*

—A letter, eh? Where did you get it, my child?

—From the store, umfundisi. The white man asked me to bring it to you.

—That was good of you. Go well, small one.

But she did not go at once. She rubbed one bare foot against the other, she rubbed one finger along the edge of the umfundisi's table.

—Perhaps you might be hungry, small one.

—Not very hungry, umfundisi.

—Perhaps a little hungry.

—Yes, a little hungry, umfundisi.

—Go to the mother then. Perhaps she has some food.

—I thank you, umfundisi.

She walked delicately, as though her feet might do harm in so great a house, a house with tables and chairs, and a clock, and a plant in a pot, and many books, more even than the books at the school.

Kumalo looked at his letter. It was dirty, especially about the stamp. It had been in many hands, no doubt. It came from Johannesburg; now there in Johannesburg were many of his own people. His brother John, who was a carpenter, had gone there, and had a business of his own in Sophiatown, Johannesburg. His sister Gertrude, twenty-five years younger than he, and the child of his parents' age, had gone there with her small son to look for the husband who had never come back from the mines. His only child Absalom had gone there, to look for his aunt

* A glossary of special South African terms will be found at the end of the book.

Gertrude, and he had never returned. And indeed many other relatives were there, though none so near as these. It was hard to say from whom this letter came, for it was so long since any of these had written that one did not well remember their writing.

He turned the letter over, but there was nothing to show from whom it came.

He was reluctant to open it, for once such a thing is opened it cannot be shut again.

He called to his wife, Has the child gone?

—She is eating, Stephen.

—Let her eat then. She brought a letter. Do you know anything about a letter?

—How should I know, Stephen?

—No, that I do not know. Look at it.

She took the letter and she felt it. But there was nothing in the touch to tell from whom it might be. She read out the address slowly—

Rev. Stephen Kumalo
St. Mark's Church
Ndotsheni
NATAL

She mustered up her courage, and said, It is not from our son.

—No, he said. And he sighed. It is not from our son.

—Perhaps it concerns him, she said.

—Yes, he said. That may be so.

—It is not from Gertrude, she said.

—Perhaps it is my brother John.

—It is not from John, she said.

They were silent, and she said, How we desire such a letter, and when it comes, we fear to open it.

—Who is afraid, he said. Open it.

She opened it, slowly and carefully, for she did not open so many letters. She spread it out open, and read it slowly and carefully, so that he did not hear all that she said. Read it aloud, he said.

She read it aloud, reading as a Zulu who reads English.

The Mission House
Sophiatown
Johannesburg
September 25th, 1946

MY DEAR BROTHER IN CHRIST,

I have had the experience of meeting a young woman here in Johannesburg. Her name is Gertrude Kumalo, and I understand she is the sister of the Rev. Stephen Kumalo, St. Mark's Church, Ndotsheni. This young woman is very sick, and therefore I ask you to come quickly to Johannesburg. Come to the Rev. Theophilus Msimangu, the Mission House, Sophiatown, and there I shall give you some advices. I shall also find accommodation for you, where the expenditure will not be very serious.

I am, dear brother in Christ,

Yours faithfully,

THEOPHILUS MSIMANGU

They were both silent till at long last she spoke.

—Well, my husband?

—Yes, what is it?

—This letter, Stephen. You have heard it now.

—Yes, I have heard it. It is not an easy letter.

—It is not an easy letter. What will you do?

He sighed. Bring me the St. Chad's money, he said.

She went out, and came back with a tin, of the kind in which they sell coffee or cocoa, and this she gave to him. He held it in his hand, studying it, as though there might be some answer in it, till at last she said, It must be done, Stephen.

—How can I use it, he said. This money was to send Absalom to St. Chad's.

—Absalom will never go now to St. Chad's.

—How can you say that? he said. How can you say such a thing?

—He is in Johannesburg, she said wearily. When people go to Johannesburg, they do not come back.

—You have said it, he said. It is said now. This money which was saved for that purpose will never be used for it. You have opened a door, and because you have opened it, we must go through. And *Tixo* alone knows where we shall go.

—It was not I who opened it, she said, hurt by his accusation. It has a long time been open, but you would not see.

—We had a son, he said harshly. Zulus have many children, but we had only one son. He went to Johannesburg, and as you said—when people go to Johannesburg, they do not come back. They do not even write any more. They do not go to St. Chad's, to learn that knowledge without which no black man can live. They go to Johannesburg, and there they are lost, and no one hears of them at all. And this money . . .

He held out the tin to her. Open it, he said.

With trembling hands she took the tin and opened it. She emptied it out over the table, some old and dirty notes, and a flood of silver and copper.

—Count it, he said.

She counted it laboriously, turning over the notes and the coins to make sure what they were.

—Twelve pounds, five shillings and seven pence.

—I shall take, he said, I shall take eight pounds, and the shillings and pence.

—Take it all, Stephen. There may be doctors, hospitals, other troubles. Take it all. And take the Post Office Book—there is ten pounds in it—you must take that also.

—I have been saving that for your stove, he said.

—That cannot be helped, she said. And that other money, though we saved it for St. Chad's, I had meant it for your new black clothes, and a new black hat, and new white collars.

—That cannot be helped either.

Let me see, I shall go . . .

—Tomorrow. From Carisbrooke.

—I shall write to the Bishop now, and tell him I do not know how long I shall be gone.

He rose heavily to his feet, and went and stood before her. I am sorry I hurt you, he said. I shall go and pray in the church.



He went out of the door, and she watched him through the little window, walking slowly to the door of the church. Then she sat down at his table, and put her head on it, and was silent, with the patient suffering of black women, with the suffering of oxen, with the suffering of any that are mute.

It is interesting to wait for the train at Carisbrooke, while it climbs up out of the great valley. Those who know, can tell you with each whistle where it is, at what road, what farm, what river. But though Stephen Kumalo has been there a full hour before he need, he does not listen to these things. This is a long way to go, and a lot of money to pay. And who knows how sick his sister may be, and what money that may cost? And if he has to bring her back, what will that cost too? And Johannesburg is a great city, with so many streets they say that a man can spend his days going up one and down another, and never the same one twice. One must catch buses too, but not as here, where the only bus that comes is the right bus. For there there is a multitude of buses, and only one bus in ten, one bus in twenty maybe, is the right bus. If you take the wrong bus, you may travel to quite some other place. And they say it is dangerous to cross the street, yet one must needs cross it. For there the wife of Mpanza of Ndotsheni, who had gone there when Mpanza was dying, saw her son Michael killed in the street. Twelve years old and moved by excitement, he stepped out into danger, but she was hesitant and stayed at the kerb. And under her eyes the great lorry crushed the life out of her son.

And the great fear too—the greatest fear since it was so seldom spoken. Where was their son? Why did he not write any more?

There is a last whistle and the train is near at last. The parson turns to his companion.

—Friend, I thank you for your help.

—Umfundisi, I was glad to help you. You could not have done it alone. This bag is heavy.

The train is nearer, it will soon be in.

—Umfundisi, I have a favour to ask.

—Ask it then.

—You know Sibeko?

—Yes.

—Well, Sibeko's daughter worked here for the white man uSmith in Ixopo. And when the daughter of uSmith married, she went to Johannesburg, and Sibeko's daughter went with them to work. The address is here, with the new name of this married woman. But Sibeko has heard no word of his daughter this ten, twelve months, and he asks you to inquire.

Kumalo took the dirty, thumbled paper and looked at it. Springs, he said. I have heard of the place. But it is not Johannesburg, though they say it is near. Friend, the train is here. I shall do what I can.

Kumalo climbed into the carriage for non-Europeans, already full of the humbler people of his race, some with assortments of European garments, some with blankets over their primitive dress, though these were all women. Men travelled no longer in primitive dress.

The journey had begun. And now the fear back again, the fear of the unknown, the fear of the great city where boys were killed crossing the street, the fear of Gertrude's sickness. Deep down the fear for his son. Deep down the fear of a man who lives in a world not made for him, whose own world is slipping away, dying, being destroyed, beyond any recall.



The humble man reached in his pocket for his sacred book, and began to read. It was this world alone that was certain.

A day and night have passed, and the train is running now through the outskirts of Johannesburg.

RAILWAY LINES, railway lines, it is a wonder. To the left, to the right, so many that he cannot count. A train rushes past, with a sudden roaring of sound that makes him jump in his seat. Another races beside them, but drops slowly behind. Stations, stations, more than he has ever imagined. People are waiting there in hundreds, but the train rushes past, leaving them disappointed.

The buildings get higher, the streets more uncountable. How does one find one's way in such a confusion? It is dusk, and the lights are coming on in the streets.

One of the passengers points for him.

—Johannesburg, umfundisi.

He sees great high buildings; there are red and green lights on them, almost as tall as the buildings. They go on and off. Water comes out of a bottle, till the glass is full. Then the lights go out. And when they come on again, lo the bottle is full and upright, and the glass empty. And there goes the bottle over again. Black and white, it says, black and white, though it is red and green. It is too much to understand.

He is silent, his head aches, he is afraid. There is this railway station to come, this great place with all its tunnels under the ground. The train stops, under a great roof, and there are thousands of people. Steps go down into the earth, and here is the tunnel under the ground. Black people, white people, some going, some coming, so many that the tunnel is full. He goes carefully that he may not bump anybody, holding tightly on to his bag. He comes out into a great hall, and the stream goes up the steps, and here he is out in the street. The noise is immense. Cars and buses one behind the other, more than he has ever imagined. The stream goes over the street, but remembering Mpanza's son, he is afraid to follow. Lights change from green to red, and back again to green. He has heard that. When it is green, you may go. But when he starts across,

a great bus swings across the path. There is some law of it that he does not understand, and he retreats again. He finds himself a place against the wall, he will look as though he is waiting for some purpose. His heart beats like that of a child, there is nothing to do or think to stop it. *Tixo*, watch over me, he says to himself. *Tixo*, watch over me.

A young man came to him and spoke to him in a language that he did not understand.

—I do not understand, he said.

—You are a Xosa, then, umfundisi?

—A Zulu, he said.

—Where do you want to go, umfundisi?

—To Sophiatown, young man.

—Come with me then and I shall show you.

He was grateful for this kindness, but half of him was afraid. He was glad the young man did not offer to carry his bag, but he spoke courteously, though in a strange Zulu.

The lights turned green, and his guide started across the street. Another car swung across the path, but the guide did not falter, and the car came to a stop. It made one feel confidence.

He could not follow the turnings that they made under the high buildings, but at last, his arm tired beyond endurance by the bag, they came to a place of many buses.

—You must stand in the line, umfundisi. Have you your money for the ticket?

Quickly, eagerly, as though he must show this young man that he appreciated his kindness, he put down his bag, took out his purse, and took a pound from it.

—Shall I get your ticket for you, umfundisi? Then you need not lose your place in the line, while I go to the ticket office.

—Thank you, he said.

The young man took the pound and walked a short distance to the corner. As he turned it, Kumalo was afraid. The line moved forward and he with it, clutching his bag. And again forward, and again forward, and soon he must enter a bus, but still he had no ticket. As though

he had suddenly thought of something he left the line, and walked to the corner, but there was no sign of the young man. He sought courage to speak to someone, and went to an elderly man, decently and cleanly dressed.

—Where is the ticket office, my friend?

—What ticket office, umfundisi?

—For the ticket for the bus.

—You get your ticket on the bus.
There is no ticket office.

The man looked a decent man, and the parson spoke to him humbly. I gave a pound to a young man, he said, and he told me he would get my ticket at the ticket office.

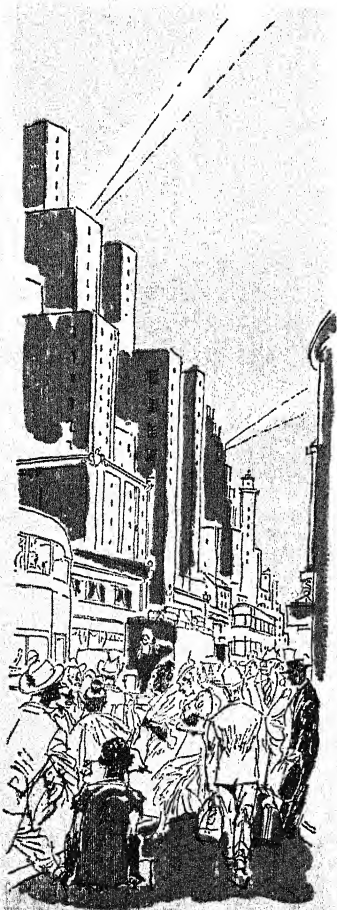
—You have been cheated, umfundisi. Can you see the young man? No, you will not see him again. Look, come with me. Where are you going, Sophiatown?

—Yes. To the Mission House.

—Oh, yes. I too am an Anglican. I was waiting for someone, but I shall wait no longer. I shall come with you myself. Do you know the Reverend Msimangu?

—Indeed, I have a letter from him.

In due time they took their places in the bus. And it in its turn swung out into the confusion of the streets. The driver smoked carelessly, and it was impossible not to admire such courage. Street after street, light after light, as though they would never end, at times at such speed that the bus swayed from side to side, and the engine roared in the ears.



They alighted at a small street, and there were still thousands of people about. They walked a great distance, through streets crowded with people. At last they stopped before a lighted house and knocked. The door opened and a young tall man in clerical dress opened to them.

—Mr. Msimangu, I bring a friend to you, the Reverend Kumalo from Ndotsheni.

—Come in, come in, my friends. Mr. Kumalo, I am glad to greet you. Is this your first visit to Johannesburg?

Kumalo spoke humbly. I am much confused, he said. I owe much to our friend.

—You fell into good hands. This is Mr. Mafolo, one of our big businessmen, and a good son of the Church. You are no doubt hungry, Mr. Kumalo. Mr. Mafolo, will you stay for some food?

But Mr. Mafolo would not wait. The door shut after him, and Kumalo settled in a big chair, and accepted a cigarette though it was not his custom to smoke. The room was light, and the great bewildering town shut out. He puffed like a child at his smoke, and was thankful. The long journey to Johannesburg was over, and he had taken a liking to this young, confident man. In good time no doubt they would come to discuss the reason for this pilgrimage safely at an end. For the moment it was enough to feel welcome and secure.

—**I** HAVE a place for you to sleep, my friend, in the house of an old woman, a Mrs. Lithebe, who is a good member of our church. She is an Msutu, but she speaks Zulu well. She will think it an honour to have a priest in the house. It is cheap, only three shillings a week, and you can have your meals with the people of the Mission. Now there is the bell. Would you like to wash your hands?

They washed their hands in a modern place, with a white basin, and water cold and hot, and towels worn but very white, and a modern lavatory too. When you were finished, you pressed a little rod, and the water rushed in as though something was broken. It would have frightened you if you had not heard of such things before.

They went into a room where a table was laid, and there he met many

priests, both white and black, and they sat down after grace and ate together. He was a bit nervous of the many plates and knives and forks, but watched what others did, and used the things likewise.

He sat next to a young rosy-cheeked priest from England, who asked him where he came from, and what it was like there. And another black priest cried out, I am also from Ixopo. My father and mother are still alive there, in the valley of the Lufafa. How is it there?

And he told them all about these places, of the great hills and valleys of that far country. And the love of them must have been in his voice, for they were all silent and listened to him. He told them too of the sickness of the land, and how the grass had disappeared, and of the dongas that ran from hill to valley, and valley to hill; how it was a land of old men and women, and mothers and children; how the maize grew barely to the height of a man; how the tribe was broken, and the house broken, and the man broken; how when they went away, many never came back, many never wrote any more.

So they all talked of the sickness of the land, of the broken tribe and the broken house, of young men and young girls that went away and forgot their customs, and lived loose and idle lives. They talked of young criminal children, and older and more dangerous criminals, of how white Johannesburg was afraid of black crime. One of them went and got him a newspaper, the *Johannesburg Mail*, and showed him in bold black letters, OLD COUPLE ROBBED AND BEATEN IN LONELY HOUSE. FOUR NATIVES ARRESTED.

—That happens nearly every day, he said. And it is not only the Europeans who are afraid. We are also afraid, right here in Sophiatown.

—You will learn much here in Johannesburg, said the rosy-cheeked priest. It is not only in your place that there is destruction. I want to hear again about your country, but I must go now.

So they broke up, and Msimangu said he would take his visitor to his own private room.

—We have much to talk about, he said.

They went to the room, and when Msimangu had shut the door they sat themselves down. Kumalo said to him. You will pardon me if I am hasty, but I am anxious to hear about my sister.

—Yes, yes, said Msimangu. I am sure you are anxious. You must think I am thoughtless. But you will pardon me if I ask you first, why did she come to Johannesburg?

Kumalo, though disturbed by this question, answered obediently. She came to look for her husband who was recruited for the mines. But when his time was up, he did not return, nor did he write at all. She did not know if he were dead perhaps. So she took her small child and went to look for him.

Then because Msimangu did not speak, he asked anxiously, Is she very sick?

Msimangu said gravely, Yes, she is very sick. But it is not that kind of sickness. It is another, a worse kind of sickness. I sent for you firstly because she is a woman who is alone, and secondly because her brother is a priest. I do not know if she ever found her husband, but she has no husband now.

He looked at Kumalo. It would be truer to say, he said, that she has many husbands.

Kumalo said, *Tixo! Tixo!*

—She lives in Claremont, not far from here. It is one of the worst places in Johannesburg. After the police have been there, you can see the liquor running in the streets. You can smell it, you can smell nothing else, wherever you go in that place.

He leant over to Kumalo. I used to drink liquor, he said, but it was a good liquor, such as our fathers made. But now I have vowed to touch no liquor any more. This is bad liquor here, made strong with all manner of things that our people have never used. And that is her work, she makes and sells it. I shall hide nothing from you, though it is painful for me. These women sleep with any man for their price. A man has been killed at her place. They gamble and drink and stab. She has been in prison, more than once.

He leant back in his chair and moved a book forward and backward on the table. This is terrible news for you, he said.

Kumalo nodded dumbly, and Msimangu brought out his cigarettes. Will you smoke? he said.

Kumalo shook his head. I do not really smoke, he said.

And they were both silent, as though a word had been spoken that made it hard to speak another. At last Kumalo said, Where is the child?

—The child is there. But it is no place for a child. And that too is why I sent for you. Perhaps if you cannot save the mother, you can save the child.

—Where is this place?

—It is not far from here. I shall take you tomorrow.

—I have another great sorrow.

—You may tell me.

—I shall be glad to tell you.

But then he was silent, and tried to speak and could not, so Msimangu said to him, Take your time, my brother.

—It is not easy. It is our greatest sorrow.

—A son, maybe. Or a daughter?

—It is a son.

—I am listening.

—Absalom was his name. He too went away, to look for my sister, but he never returned, nor after a while did he write any more. Our letters, his mother's and mine, all came back to us. And now after what you tell me, I am still more afraid.

—We shall try to find him, my brother. Perhaps your sister will know. You are tired, and I should take you to the room I have got for you.

—Yes, that would be better.

They rose, and Kumalo said, It is my habit to pray in the church. Maybe you will show me.

—It is on the way.

Kumalo said humbly, Maybe you will pray for me.

—I shall do it gladly. My brother, I have of course my work to do, but so long as you are here, my hands are yours.

—You are kind.

Something in the humble voice must have touched Msimangu, for he said, I am not kind. I am a selfish and sinful man, but God put his hands on me, that is all. He picked up Kumalo's bag, but before they reached the door Kumalo stopped him.

—I have one more thing to tell you.

—Yes.

—I have a brother also, here in Johannesburg. He too does not write any more. John Kumalo, a carpenter.

Msimangu smiled. I know him, he said. He is too busy to write. He is one of our great politicians.

—A politician? My brother?

—Yes, he is a great man in politics.

Msimangu paused. I hope I shall not hurt you further. Your brother has no use for the Church any more. He says that what God has not done for South Africa, man must do. That is what he says.

—This is a bitter journey.

—I can believe it.

—Sometimes I fear—what will the Bishop say when he hears. One of his priests?

—What can a Bishop say? Things are happening that no Bishop can stop. They must go on.

—How can you say they must go on?

—They must go on, said Msimangu gravely. You cannot stop the world from going on. My friend, I am a Christian. It is not in my heart to hate a white man. It was a white man who brought my father out of darkness. But you will pardon me if I talk frankly to you. The tragedy is not that things are broken. The tragedy is that they are not mended again. The white man has broken the tribe. And it is my belief—and again I ask your pardon—that it cannot be mended again. But the house that is broken, and the man that falls apart when the house is broken, these are the tragic things. That is why children break the law, and old white people are robbed and beaten.

He passed his hand across his brow.

—It suited the white man to break the tribe, he continued gravely. But it has not suited him to build something in the place of what is broken. I have pondered this for many hours, and I must speak it, for it is the truth for me. They are not all so. There are some white men who give their lives to build up what is broken.

—But they are not enough, he said. They are afraid, that is the truth. It is fear that rules this land.

He laughed apologetically. These things are too many to talk about now. They are things to talk over quietly and patiently. You must get Father Vincent to talk about them. He is a white man and can say what must be said. He is the one with the boy's cheeks, the one who wants to hear more about your country. But come, let us go to the church.

—Mrs. Lithebe, I bring my friend to you. The Reverend Stephen Kumalo.

—Umfundisi, you are welcome. The room is small, but clean.

—I am sure of it.

—Good night, my brother, said Msimangu. Shall I see you in the church tomorrow at seven?

—Assuredly.

—And after that I shall take you to eat. Stay well, my friend. Stay well, Mrs. Lithebe.

—Go well, my friend.

—Go well, umfundisi.

She took him to the small clean room and lit a candle for him.

—If there is anything, you will ask, umfundisi.

—I thank you.

—Sleep well, umfundisi.

—Sleep well, mother.

He stood a moment in the room. Forty-eight hours ago he and his wife had been packing his bag in far-away Ndotsheni. Twenty-four hours ago the train had been thundering through an unseen country. And now outside, the stir and movement of people, but behind them, through them, one could hear the roar of a great city. Johannesburg. Johannesburg.

Who could believe it?

IT is not far to Claremont. They lie together; Sophiatown, where any may own property, Western Native Township which belongs to the Municipality of Johannesburg, and Claremont, the garbage heap of the proud city. These three are bounded on the west by the European district

of Newlands, and on the east by the European district of Westdene.

—That is a pity, says Msimangu. I am not a man for segregation, but it is a pity that we are not apart. They run trams from the centre of the city, and part is for Europeans and part for us. But we are often thrown off the trams by young hooligans. And our hooligans are ready for trouble too.

—But the authorities, do they allow that?

—They do not. But they cannot watch every tram.

And if a trouble develops, who can find how it began, and who will tell the truth? It is a pity we are not apart.

So they walked till they came to Claremont and Kumalo was shocked by its shabbiness and dirtiness, and the closeness of the houses, and the filth in the streets.

—Do you see that woman, my friend?

—I see her.

—She is one of the queens, the liquor sellers. They say she is one of the richest of our people in Johannesburg.

—And these children? Why are they not at school?

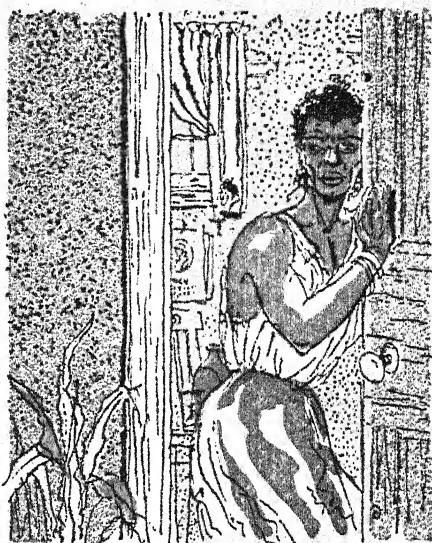
—Some because they do not care, and some because their parents do not care, but many because the schools are full.

They walked down Lily Street, and turned off into Hyacinth Street, for the names there are very beautiful.

—It is here, brother. Number eleven. Do you go in alone?

—It would be better.

—When you are ready, you will find me at Number thirteen, next



door. There is a woman of our church there, and a good woman who tries with her husband to bring up good children. But it is hard. Their eldest daughter whom I prepared for confirmation has run away, and lives in Pimville, with a young loafer of the streets. Knock there, my friend. You know where to find me.

There is laughter in the house, the kind of laughter of which one is afraid. Perhaps because one is afraid already, perhaps because it is in truth bad laughter. A woman's voice, and men's voices. But he knocks, and she opens.

—It is I, my sister.

Have no doubt it is fear in her eyes. She draws back a step, and makes no move towards him. She turns and says something that he cannot hear. Chairs are moved, and other things are taken. She turns to him.

—I am making ready, my brother.

They stand and look at each other, he anxious, she afraid. She turns and looks back into the room. A door closes, and she says, Come in, my brother.

Only then does she reach her hand to him. It is cold and wet, there is no life in it.

They sit down, she is silent upon her chair.

—I have come, he said.

—It is good.

—You did not write.

—No, I did not write.

—Where is your husband?

—I have not found him, my brother.

—But you did not write.

—I had no money to write.

—Not two pennies for a stamp?

She does not answer him. She does not look at him.

—But I hear you are rich.

—I am not rich.

—I hear you have been in prison.

—That is true indeed.

—Was it for liquor?

A spark of life comes into her. She must do something, she cannot keep so silent. She tells him she was not guilty. There was some other woman.

—You stayed with this woman?

—Yes.

—Why did you stay with such a woman?

—I had no other place.

—And you helped her with her trade?

—I had to have money for the child.

—Where is the child?

She looks round vaguely. She gets up and goes to the yard. She calls, but the voice that was once so sweet has a new quality in it, the quality of the laughter that he heard in the house. She is revealing herself to him.

—I have sent for the child, she says.

—Where is it?

—It shall be fetched, she says.

There is discomfort in her eyes, and she stands fingering the wall. The anger wells up in him.

—Where shall I sleep? he asks.

The fear in her eyes is unmistakable. Now she will reveal herself, but his anger masters him, and he does not wait for it.

—You have shamed us, he says in a low voice, not wishing to make it known to the world. A liquor seller, a prostitute, with a child and you do not know where it is. Your brother a priest. How could you do this to us?

She looks at him sullenly, like an animal that is tormented.

—I have come to take you back. She falls on the floor and cries; her cries become louder and louder, she has no shame.

—They will hear us, he says urgently.

She tries to control her sobs.

—Do you wish to come back?

She nods her head. I do not like Johannesburg, she says. I am sick here. The child is sick also.

—Do you wish with your heart to come back?

She nods her head again. She sobs too. I do not like Johannesburg, she says. She looks at him with eyes of distress, and his heart quickens with hope. I am a bad woman, my brother. I am no woman to go back.

His eyes fill with tears, his deep gentleness returns to him. He goes to her and lifts her from the floor to the chair. Inarticulately he strokes her face, his heart filled with pity.

—God forgives us, he says. Who am I not to forgive? Let us pray.

They knelt down, and he prayed, quietly so that the neighbours might not hear, and she punctuated his petitions with *Amens*. And when he had finished, she burst into a torrent of prayer, of self-denunciation, and urgent petition. And thus reconciled, they sat hand in hand.

—And now I ask you for help, he said.

—What is it, my brother?

—Our child, have you not heard of him?

—I did hear of him, brother. He was working at some big place in Johannesburg, and he lived in Sophiatown, but where I am not sure. But I know who will know. The son of our brother John and your son were often together. John will know.

—I shall go there. And now, my sister, I must see if Mrs. Lithebe has a room for you. Have you many things?

—Not many. This table and those chairs, and a bed. And some few dishes and pots. That is all.

—I shall find someone to fetch them. You will be ready?

—My brother, here is the child.

Into the room, shepherded by an older girl, came his little nephew. His clothes were dirty and his nose running, and he put his finger in his mouth, and gazed at his uncle out of wide saucer-like eyes.

Kumalo lifted him up, and wiped his nose clean, and kissed and fondled him.

—It will be better for the child, he said. He will go to a place where the wind blows, and where there is a school for him.

—It will be better, she agreed.

—I must go, he said. There is much to do.

He went out into the street, and curious neighbours stared at him. It was an *umfundisi* that was here.

He found his friend, and poured out his news, and asked him where they could find a man to fetch his sister, her child and her possessions.

—We shall go now, said Msimangu. I am glad for your sake, my friend.

—There is a great load off my mind, my friend. Please God the other will be as successful.

He fetched her with a lorry that afternoon, amidst a crowd of interested neighbours, who discussed the affair loudly and frankly, some with approval, and some with the strange laughter of the towns. He was glad when the lorry was loaded, and they left.

Mrs. Lithebe showed them their room, and gave the mother and child their food while Kumalo went down to the Mission. And that night they held prayers in the dining-room, and Mrs. Lithebe and Gertrude punctuated his petitions with *Amens*. Kumalo himself was light-hearted and gay like a boy, more so than he had been for years. One day in Johannesburg, and already the tribe was being rebuilt, the house and the soul restored.

GERTRUDE'S DRESS, for all that she might once have been rich, was dirty, and the black greasy knitted cap that she wore on her head made him ashamed. Although his money was little, he bought her a red dress and a white thing that they called a turban for her head. Also a shirt, a pair of short trousers, and a jersey for the boy; and a couple of stout handkerchiefs for his mother to use on his nose. In his pocket was his Post Office Book, and there was ten pounds there that he and his wife were saving to buy the stove, for that, like any woman, she had long been wanting to have. To save ten pounds from a stipend of eight pounds a month takes much patience and time, especially for a parson, who must dress in good black clothes. His clerical collars were brown and frayed, but they must wait now a while. It was a pity about the ten pounds, that it would sooner or later have to be broken into, but the trains did not carry for nothing, and they would no doubt get a pound or two for her things. Strange that she had saved nothing from her sad employment, which brought in much money, it was said.

But this day would begin the search for his son. There was Msimangu coming up the street.

—Are you ready, my friend?

—Yes, I am ready.

They walked up the street, and down another, and up yet another. It was true what they said, that you could go up one street and down another till the end of your days, and never walk the same one twice.

—Here is your brother's shop. You see his name.

—Yes, I see it.

—Shall I come with you?

—Yes, I think it would be right.

His brother John was sitting there on a chair, talking to two other men. He had grown fat, and sat with his hands on his knees like a chief. He did not recognize Kumalo, for the light from the street was on the backs of his visitors.

—Good morning, my brother.

—Good morning, sir.

—Good morning my own brother, son of our mother.

John Kumalo looked closely at him, and stood up with a great hearty smile.

—My own brother. Well, well, who can believe? What are you doing in Johannesburg?

Kumalo looked at the visitors. I come on business, he said.

—I am sure my friends will excuse us. My own brother, the son of our mother, has come.

The two men rose, and they all said, Stay well and go well.

—Do you know the Reverend Msimangu, my brother?

—Well, well, he is known to everybody. Everybody knows the Reverend Msimangu. Sit down, gentlemen. I think we must have some tea.

He went to the door and called into the place behind.

—Is your wife Esther well, my brother?

John Kumalo smiled his jolly and knowing smile. My wife Esther has left me these ten years, my brother.

—And have you married again?

—Well, well, not what the Church calls married, you know. But she is a good woman.

—You wrote nothing of this, brother.

—No, how could I write? You people in Ndotsheni do not understand the way life is in Johannesburg. I thought it better not to write.

—That is why you stopped writing.

—Well, well, that could be why I stopped. Trouble, brother, unnecessary trouble.

—But I do not understand. How is life different in Johannesburg?

—Well, that is difficult. Do you mind if I speak in English? I can explain these things better in English.

—Speak in English, then, brother.

—You see I have had an experience here in Johannesburg. It is not like Ndotsheni. One must live here to understand it.

He looked at his brother. Something new is happening here, he said.

He did not sit down, but began to speak in a strange voice. He walked about, and looked through the window into the street, and up at the ceiling, and into the corners of the room as though something were there, and must be brought out.

—Down in Ndotsheni I am nobody, even as you are nobody, my brother. I am subject to the chief, who is an ignorant man. I must salute him and bow to him, but he is an uneducated man. Here in Johannesburg I am a man of some importance, of some influence. I have my own business, and when it is good, I can make ten, twelve pounds a week.

He began to sway to and fro, he was not speaking to them, he was speaking to people who were not there.

—I do not say we are free here. I do not say we are free as men should be. But at least I am free of the chief. At least I am free of an old and ignorant man, who is nothing but a white man's dog. He is a trick, a trick to hold together something that the white man desires to hold together.

He smiled his cunning and knowing smile, and for a moment addressed himself to his visitors.

—But it is not being held together, he said. It is breaking apart, your tribal society. It is here in Johannesburg that the new society is being built. Something is happening here, my brother.

He paused for a moment, then he said, I do not wish to offend you gentlemen, but the Church too is like the chief. You must do so and so and so. You are not free to have an experience. A man must be faithful and meek and obedient, and he must obey the laws, whatever the laws may be. It is true that the Church speaks with a fine voice, and that the Bishops speak against the laws. But this they have been doing for fifty years, and things get worse, not better.

His voice grew louder, and he was again addressing people who were not there. Here in Johannesburg it is the mines, he said, everything is the mines. These high buildings, this wonderful City Hall, this beautiful Parktown with its beautiful houses, all this is built with the gold from the mines. This wonderful hospital for Europeans, the biggest hospital south of the Equator, it is built with the gold from the mines.

There was a change in his voice, it became louder like the voice of a bull or a lion. Go to our hospital, he said, and see our people lying on the floors. They lie so close you cannot step over them. But it is they who dig the gold. For three shillings a day. We live in the compounds, we must leave our wives and families behind. And when the new gold is found, it is not we who will get more for our labour. It is the white man's share that will rise, you will read it in all the papers. They go mad when new gold is found. They bring more of us to live in the compounds, to dig under the ground for three shillings a day. They do not think, here is a chance to pay more for our labour. They think only, here is a chance to build a bigger house and buy a bigger car. It is important to find gold, they say, for all South Africa is built on the mines.

He growled, and his voice grew deep, it was like thunder that was rolling.

—But it is not built on the mines, he said, it is built on our backs, on our sweat, on our labour. Every factory, every theatre, every beautiful house, they are all built by us. And what does a chief know about that? But here in Johannesburg they know.

He stopped, and was silent. And his visitors were silent also, for there was something in this voice that compelled one to be silent. Then Kumalo spoke to this new brother that he saw.

—I have listened attentively to you, my brother. Much of what you

say saddens me, partly because of the way you say it, and partly because much of it is true. And now I have something to ask of you. But I must tell you first that Gertrude is with me here. She is coming back to Ndotsheni.

—Well, well, I shall not say it is a bad thing. Johannesburg is not a place for a woman alone. I myself tried to persuade her, but she did not agree, so we did not meet any more.

—And now I must ask you. Where is my son?

There is something like discomfort in John's eyes. He takes out a large red handkerchief to wipe his face.

—Well, you have heard no doubt he was friendly with my son.

—I have heard that.

—Well, you know how these young men are. I do not blame them altogether. You see, my son did not agree well with his second mother. What it was about I could never discover. Nor did he agree with his mother's children. Many times I tried to arrange matters, but I did not succeed. So he said he would leave. He had good work so I did not stop him. And your son went with him.

—Where, my brother?

—I do not rightly know. But I heard that they had a room in Alexandra. Now wait a minute. They were both working for a factory. I remember. Wait till I look in the telephone book.

He went to a table and there Kumalo saw the telephone. He felt a little pride to be the brother of a man who had such a thing.

—There it is. Doornfontein Textiles Company. 14 Krause Street. I shall write it down for you, my brother.

—Can we not telephone them, asked Kumalo hesitantly.

His brother laughed. What for, he asked. To ask if Absalom Kumalo is working there? Or to ask if they will call him to the telephone? Or to ask if they will give his address? They do not do such things for a black man, my brother.

—It does not matter, said Msimangu. My hands are yours, my friend.

They said their farewells and went out into the street.

—Huh, there you have it.

—Yes, we have it there.

—He is a big man, in this place, your brother. His shop is always full of men, talking as you have heard. But they say you must hear him at a meeting, he and Dubula and a brown man named Tomlinson. They say he speaks like a bull, and growls in his throat like a lion, and could make men mad if he would. But for that they say he has not enough courage, for he would surely be sent to prison.

—I shall tell you one thing, Msimangu continued. Many of the things that he said are true.

He stopped in the street and spoke quietly and earnestly to his companion.

—Because the white man has power, we too want power, he said. But when a black man gets power, when he gets money, he is a great man if he is not corrupted. I have seen it often. He seeks power and money to put right what is wrong, and when he gets them, why he enjoys the power and the money. Now he can gratify his lusts, now he can arrange ways to get white man's liquor, and the power has no heart in it. There is only one thing that has power completely, and that is love.

—I see only one hope for our country, and that is when white men and black men, desiring neither power nor money, but desiring only the good of their country, come together to work for it.

He was grave and silent, and then he said sombrely, I have one great fear in my heart, that one day when they are turned to loving, they will find we are turned to hating.

—This is not the way to get to Doornfontein, he said. Come, let us hurry.

And Kumalo followed him silently, oppressed by the grave and sombre words.

But they were not successful at Doornfontein, although the white men treated them with consideration. Msimangu knew how to arrange things with white men, and they went to a great deal of trouble, and found that Absalom Kumalo had left them some twelve months before. One of them remembered that Absalom had been friendly with one of their workmen, Dhlamini, and this man was sent for from his work. He told them that, when he had last heard, Absalom was staying with a Mrs.

Ndlela, of End Street, Sophiatown, the street that separates Sophiatown from the European suburb of Westdene.

He was not sure, but he thought that the number of the house was a hundred and five.

So they returned to Sophiatown, and indeed found Mrs. Ndlela at 105 End Street. She received them with a quiet kindness, and her children hid behind her skirts, and peeped out at the visitors. But Absalom was not there, she said. But wait, she had had a letter from him, asking about the things he had left behind. So while Kumalo played with her children, and Msimangu talked to her husband, she brought out a big box full of papers and others belongings, and looked for the letter. And while she was searching, and Msimangu was watching her kind and tired face, he saw her stop in her search for a moment, and look at Kumalo for a moment, half curiously, and half with pity. At last she found the letter, and she showed them the address, c/o Mrs. Mkize, 79 Twenty-Third Avenue, Alexandra.

Then they must drink a cup of tea, and it was dark before they rose to leave, and the husband stepped out with Kumalo into the street.

—Why did you look at my friend with pity, asked Msimangu of the woman.

She dropped her eyes, then raised them again. He is an umfundisi, she said.

—Yes.

—I did not like his son's friends. Nor did my husband. That is why he left us.

—I understand you. Was there anything worse than that—

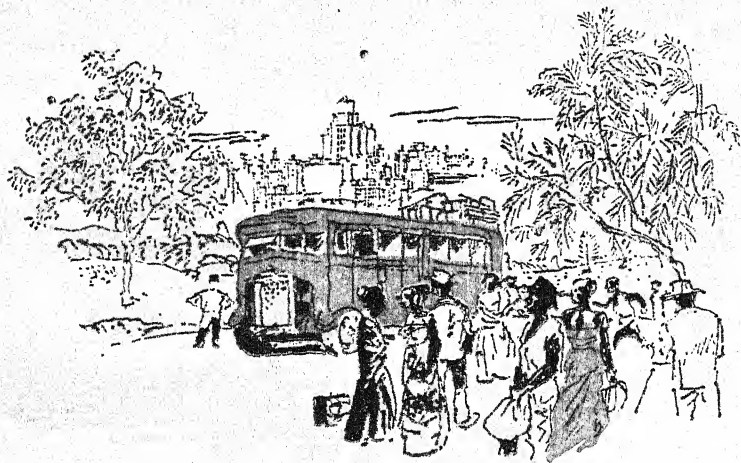
—No. I saw nothing. But I did not like his friends.

Out in the street they said farewell to the husband, and set off back to the Mission House.

—Tomorrow, said Msimangu, we go to Alexandra.

Kumalo put his hand on his friend's arm. The things are not happy that brought me to Johannesburg, he said, but I have found much pleasure in your company.

—Huh, said Msimangu, huh, we must hurry or we shall be late for our food.



THE NEXT morning, after they had eaten at the Mission House, Msimangu and Kumalo set off for the great wide road that led to Alexandra.

They walked, through many streets full of cars and buses and people, till they reached the bus rank for Alexandra. But here they met an unexpected obstacle, for a man came up to them and said to Msimangu, Are you going to Alexandra, umfundisi?

—Yes, my friend.

—We are here to stop you, umfundisi. Not by force, you see—he pointed—the police are there to prevent that. But by persuasion. If you use this bus you are weakening the cause of the black people. We have determined not to use these buses until the fare is brought back again to fourpence.

—Yes, indeed, I have heard of it.

He turned to Kumalo.

—I was very foolish, my friend. I had forgotten the boycott of the buses.

—Our business is very urgent, said Kumalo humbly.

—This boycott is also urgent, said the man politely. They want us to

pay sixpence, that is one shilling a day. Six shillings a week, and some of us only get thirty-five or forty shillings.

—Is it far to walk? asked Kumalo.

—It is a long way, umfundisi. Eleven miles.

—That is a long way, for an old man.

—Men as old as you are doing it every day, umfundisi. I cannot stop you taking a bus, umfundisi, but this is a cause to fight for. If we lose it, then they will have to pay more in Sophiatown and Claremont and Kliptown and Pimville.

—I understand you well. We shall not use the bus.

The man thanked them and went to another would-be traveller.

—That man has a silver tongue, said Kumalo.

—That is the famous Dubula, said Msimangu quietly. A friend of your brother John. But they say—excuse me, my friend—that Tomlinson has the brains, and your brother the voice, but that this man has the heart. Well, my friend, what do we do now?

—I am willing to walk.

—Eleven miles, and eleven miles back. It is a long journey.

—I am willing. You understand I am anxious, my friend. This Johannesburg—it is no place for a boy to be alone.

—Good. Let us begin then.

So they walked many miles through the European city, up Twist Street to the Clarendon Circle, and down Louis Botha towards Orange Grove. And the cars and lorries never ceased, going one way or the other. After a long time a car stopped and a white man spoke to them.

—Where are you two going? he asked.

—To Alexandra, sir, said Msimangu, taking off his hat.

—I thought you might be. Climb in.

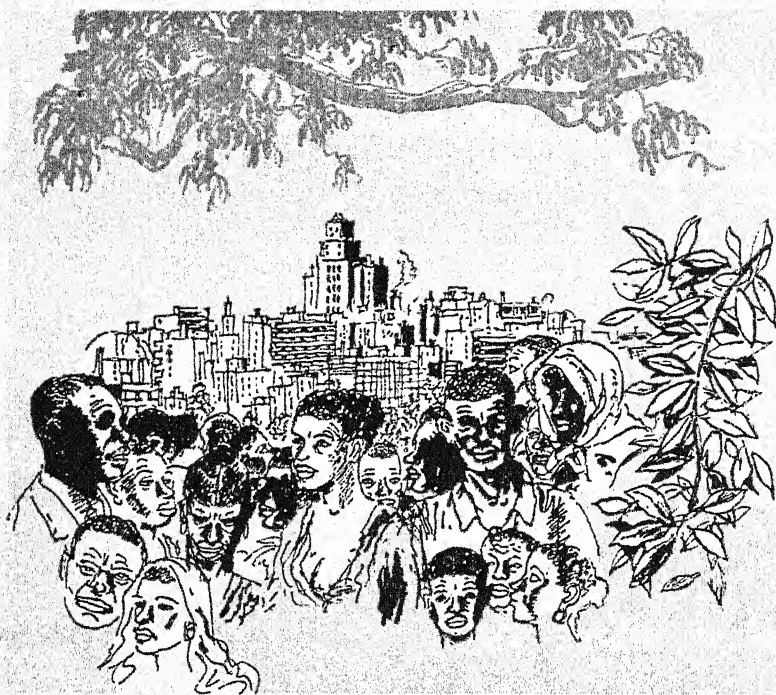
That was a great help to them, and at the turn-off to Alexandra they expressed their thanks.

—It is a long journey, said the white man. And I know that you have no buses.

They stood to watch him go on, but he did not go on.

He swung round, and was soon on the road back to Johannesburg.

—Huh, said Msimangu, that is something to marvel at.



It was still a long way to Twenty-Third Avenue, and as they passed one avenue after the other, Msimangu explained that Alexandra was outside the boundaries of Johannesburg, and was a place where a black man could buy land and own a house. But the streets were not cared for, and there were no lights, and so great was the demand for accommodation that every man, if he could, built rooms in his yard and sub-let them to others. Many of these rooms were the hide-outs for robbers, and there was much prostitution and brewing of illicit liquor.

—These things are very bad, said Msimangu. One of our young boys snatched a bag there from an old white woman, and she fell to the ground, and died there of shock and fear. And there was a terrible case of a white woman who lived by herself in a house not far from here, and because she resisted some of our young men who broke in, they killed

her. Sometimes, too, white men and women sit in their cars in the dark under the trees on the Pretoria Road; and some of our young men sometimes rob and assault them, sometimes even the women. It is true that they are often bad women, but that is the one crime we dare not speak of.

—The white people of Orange Grove and Norwood and Highlands North got up a great petition to do away with Alexandra altogether. But our white friends fought against this petition, for they said that the good things of the place were more than the bad. That it was something to have a place of one's own, and a house to bring up children in, and a place to have a voice in, so that a man is something in the land where he was born. Professor Hoernlé—he is dead, God rest his soul—he was the great fighter for us. Huh, I am sorry you cannot hear him. When he spoke, there was no white man that could speak against him.

He took out his handkerchief and wiped his face. I have talked a great deal, he said, right up to the very house we are seeking.

A woman opened the door to them. She gave them no greeting, and when they stated their business, it was with reluctance that she let them in.

—You say the boy has gone, Mrs. Mkize?

—Yes, I do not know where he is gone.

—When did he go?

—These many months. A year it must be.

—And had he a friend?

—Yes, another Kumalo. The son of his father's brother. But they left together.

—And you do not know where they went?

—They talked of many places. But you know how these young men talk.

—How did he behave himself, this young man Absalom? Kumalo asked her.

Have no doubt it is fear in her eyes. Have no doubt it is fear now in his eyes also. It is fear, here in this house.

—I saw nothing wrong, she said.

—But you guessed there was something wrong.

—There was nothing wrong, she said.

—Then why are you afraid?

—I am not afraid, she said.

She looked at them sullenly, watchfully.

—We thank you, said Msimangu. Stay well.

—Go well, she said.

Out in the street Kumalo spoke.

—There is something wrong, he said.

—I do not deny it. My friend, two of us are too many together. Turn left at the big street and go up the hill, and you will find a place for refreshment. Wait for me there.

Heavy-hearted the old man went, and Msimangu followed him slowly till he turned at the corner.

Then he returned to the house.

She opened again to him, as sullen as before; now that she had recovered, there was more sullenness than fear.

—I am not from the police, he said. I have nothing to do with the police, I wish to have nothing to do with them. But there is an old man suffering because he cannot find his son.

—That is a bad thing, she said, but she spoke as one speaks who must speak so.

—It is a bad thing, he said, and I cannot leave you until you have told what you would not tell.

—I have nothing to tell, she said.

—You have nothing to tell because you are afraid. I shall not leave you till I discover it. And if it is necessary, I shall go to the police after all, because there will be no other place to go.

—It is hard for a woman who is alone, she said resentfully.

—It is hard for an old man seeking his son.

—I am afraid, she said.

—He is afraid also. Could you not see he is afraid?

—I could see it, umfundisi.

—Then tell me, what sort of life did they lead here, these two young men? But she kept silent, with the fear in her eyes, and tears near to them. He could see she would be hard to move.

—I am a priest. Would you not take my word? But she kept silent.

—Have you a Bible?

—I have a Bible.

—Then I will swear to you on the Bible.

But she kept silent till he said again, I will swear to you on the Bible. So getting no peace, she rose irresolute, and went to a room behind, and after some time she returned with the Bible.

—I am a priest, he said. My yea has always been yea, and my nay, nay. But because you desire it, and because an old man is afraid, I swear to you on this Book that no trouble will come to you of this, for we seek only a boy. So help me *Tira*.

—What sort of life did they lead? he asked.

—They brought many things here, umfundisi, in the late hours of the night. They were clothes, and watches, and money, and food in bottles, and many other things.

—Was there ever blood on them?

—I never saw blood on them, umfundisi.

—That is something. Only a little, but something.

—And why did they leave? he asked.

—I do not know, umfundisi. But I think they were near to being discovered.

—And they left when?

—About a year since, umfundisi. Indeed as I told you.

—And here on this Book you will swear you do not know where they are gone?

She reached for the Book, but, It does not matter, he said. He said farewell to her, and hurried out after his friend. But she called after him. . . .

—They were friendly with the taxi-driver Hlabeni. Near the bus rank he lives. Everyone knows him.

—For that I give you thanks. Stay well, Mrs. Mkize.

At the refreshment stall he found his friend.

—Did you find anything further? asked the old man eagerly.

—I heard of a friend of theirs, the taxi-driver Hlabeni. Let me first eat, and we shall find him out.

When Msimangu had eaten, he went to ask a man where he could find Hlabeni, the taxi-driver. There he is on the corner sitting in his taxi, said the man. Msimangu walked over to the taxi, and said to the man sitting in it, Good afternoon, my friend.

—Good afternoon, umfundisi.

—I want a taxi, my friend. What do you charge to Johannesburg? For myself and a friend?

—For you, umfundisi, I should charge eleven shillings.

—It is a lot of money.

—Another taxi would charge fifteen or twenty shillings.

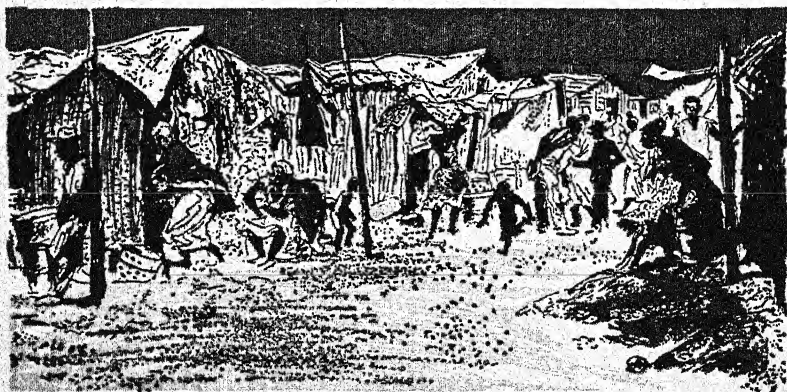
—My companion is old and tired. I shall pay you eleven shillings.

The man made to start his engine, but Msimangu stopped him. I am told, he said, that you can help me to find a young man Absalom Kumalo.

Have no doubt too that this man is afraid. But Msimangu was quick to reassure him. I am not here for trouble, he said. I give you my word that I am seeking trouble neither for you nor for myself. But my companion, the old man who is tired, is the father of this young man, and he has come from Natal to find him. Everywhere we go, we are told to go somewhere else, and the old man is anxious.

—Yes, I knew this young man.

—And where is he now, my friend?



—I heard he was gone to Orlando, and lives there amongst the squatters in Shanty Town. But further than that I do not know.

—Orlando is a big place, said Msimangu.

—Where the squatters live is not so big, umfundisi. It should not be hard to find him. There are people from the Municipality working among the squatters, and they know them all. Could you not ask one of those people?

—There you have helped me, my friend. I know some of those people. Come, we shall take your taxi. Another day we shall find him.

—And this is Shanty Town, my friend.

Even here the children laugh in the narrow lanes that run between these tragic habitations. A sheet of iron, a few planks, hessian and grass, an old door from some forgotten house. Smoke curls from vents cunningly contrived, there is a smell of food, there is a sound of voices, not raised in anger or pain, but talking of ordinary things, of this one that is born and that one that has died, of this one that does so well at school and that one who is now in prison.

There is drought over the land, and the sun shines warmly down from the cloudless sky. But what will they do when it rains, what will they do when it is winter?

—It is sad for me to see.

—Yet see them building over there. And that they have not done for many a year. Some good may come of this. And this too is Dubula's work.

—He is everywhere, it seems.

—See, there is one of our nurses. Does she not look well in her red and white, and her cap upon her head?

—She looks well indeed.

—The white people are training more and more of them. It is strange how we move forward in some things, and stand still in others, and go backward in yet others. Yet in this matter of nurses we have many friends amongst the white people. There was a great outcry when it was decided to allow some of our young people to train as doctors at the European University of the Witwatersrand. But our friends stood firm,

and they will train there until we have a place of our own. Good morning, nurse.

—Good morning, umfundisi.

—Nurse, have you been working here long?

—Yes, as long as the place is here.

—And did you ever know a young man, Absalom Kumalo?

—Yes, that I did. But he is not here now. And I can tell where he stayed. He stayed with the Hlatshwayos, and they are still here. Do you see the place where there are many stones so that they cannot build? See, there is a small boy standing there.

—Yes, I see it.

—And beyond it the house with the pipe, where the smoke is coming out?

—Yes, I see it.

—Go down that lane, and you will find the Hlatshwayos in the third or fourth house, on the side of the hand that you eat with.

—Thank you, nurse, we shall go.

Her directions were so clear that they had no difficulty in finding the house.

—Good morning, mother.

The woman was clean and nice-looking, and she smiled at them in a friendly way.

—Good morning, umfundisi.

—Mother, we are looking for a lad, Absalom Kumalo.

—He stayed with me, umfundisi. We took pity on him because he had no place to go. But I am sorry to tell you that they took him away, and I heard that the magistrate had sent him to the reformatory.

—The reformatory?

—Yes, the big school over there, beyond the soldiers' hospital. It is not too far to walk.

—I must thank you, mother. Stay well. Come, my friend. They walked on in silence, for neither of them had any words. Kumalo would have stumbled, though the road was straight and even, and Msimangu took his arm.

—Have courage, my brother.

He glanced at his friend, but Kumalo's eyes were on the ground. Although Msimangu could not see his face, he could see the drop that fell on the ground, and he tightened his grip on the arm.

—Have courage, my brother.

—Sometimes it seems that I have no more courage.

—I have heard of this reformatory. Your friend the priest from England speaks well of it. I have heard him say that if any boy wishes to amend, there is help for him there. So take courage.

—I was afraid of this.

—Yes, I too was afraid of it.

—Yes, you became afraid in Alexandra, when you sent me on, and you returned to speak again to the woman.

—I see that I cannot hide from you.

—That is not because I am so wise. Only because it is my son. What did the woman say to you, my friend?

—She said that these two young men were in some mischief. Many goods, white people's goods, came to the house.

—This reformatory, can they reform there?

—I do not know it well. Some people say one thing, some the other. But your friend speaks well of it.

And after a long while, during which Msimangu's thoughts had wandered elsewhere, Kumalo said again, It is my hope that they can reform there.

—It is my hope also, my brother.

After a walk of about an hour, they came to the road that led up to the reformatory. It was midday when they arrived, and from all directions there came boys marching, into the gates of the reformatory. From every place they came, until it seemed the marching would never end.

—There are very many here, my friend.

—Yes, I did not know there would be so many.

One of their own people, a pleasant fellow with a smiling face, came up to them and asked them what they wanted, and they told him they were searching for one Absalom Kumalo. So this man took them to an office, where a young white man inquired of them in Afrikaans what was their business.

—We are looking, sir, for the son of my friend, one Absalom Kumalo, said Msimangu in the same language.

—Absalom Kumalo. Yes, I know him well. Strange, he told me he had no people.

—Your son told him, my friend, that he had no people, said Msimangu in Zulu.

—He was no doubt ashamed, said Kumalo. I am sorry, he said to Msimangu in Zulu, that I speak no Afrikaans. For he had heard that sometimes they do not like black people who speak no Afrikaans.

—You may speak what you will, said the young man: Your son did well here, he said. He became one of our senior boys, and I have great hope for his future.

—You mean, sir, that he is gone?

—Gone, yes, only one month ago. We made an exception in his case, partly because of his good behaviour, partly because of his age, but mainly because there was a girl who was pregnant by him. She came here to see him, and he seemed fond of her, and anxious about the child that would be born. And the girl too seemed fond of him, so with all these things in mind, and with his solemn undertaking that he would work for his child and its mother, we asked the Minister to let him go. Of course we do not succeed in all these cases, but where there seems to be real affection between the parties, we take the chance, hoping that good will come of it. One thing is certain that if it fails, there is nothing that could have succeeded.

—And is he now married, sir?

—No, umfundisi, he is not. But everything is arranged for the marriage. This girl has no people, and your son told us he had no people, so I myself and my native assistant have arranged it.

—That is good of you, sir. I thank you for them.

—It is our work. You must not worry too much about this matter, and the fact that they were not married, the young man said kindly. The real question is whether he will care for them, and lead a decent life.

—That I can see, although it is a shock to me.

—I understand that. Now I can help you in this matter. If you will

sit outside while I finish my work, I will take you to Pimville, where Absalom and this girl are living. He will not be there, because I have found work for him in the town, and they have given me good reports of him. I persuaded him to open a Post Office Book, and he already has three or four pounds in it.

—Indeed, I cannot thank you, sir.

—It is our work, said the young man. Now if you will leave me, I shall finish what I have to do, and then take you to Pimville.

Outside the pleasant-faced man came and spoke to them and hearing their plans, invited them to his house, where he and his wife had a number of boys in their charge, boys who had left the big reformatory building and were living outside in these free houses. He gave them some tea and food, and he too told them that Absalom had become a head-boy, and had behaved well during his stay at the reformatory. So they talked about the reformatory, and the children that were growing up in Johannesburg without home or school or custom, and about the broken tribe and the sickness of the land, until a messenger came from the young man to say that he was ready.

It was not long before the motor-car had reached Pimville, which is a village of half-tanks used as houses, set up many years before in emergency, and used ever since. For there have never been houses enough for all the people who came to Johannesburg. At the gate they asked permission to enter, for a white man may not go into these places without permission.

They stopped at one of these half-tank houses, and the young white man took them in, where they were greeted by a young girl, who herself seemed no more than a child.

—We have come to inquire after Absalom, said the young white man. This umfundisi is his father.

—He went on Saturday to Springs, and he has not yet returned.

The young man was silent awhile, and he frowned in perplexity or anger.

—But this is Tuesday, he said. Have you heard nothing from him?

—Nothing, she said.

—When will he return? he asked.

—I do not know, she said.

—Will he ever return? he asked, indifferently, carelessly.

—I do not know, she said. She said it tonelessly, hopelessly, as one who is used to waiting, to desertion. She said it as one who expects nothing from her years upon the earth. No rebellion will come out of her, no demands, no fierceness. Nothing will come out of her at all, save the children of men who will use her, leave her, forget her. And so slight was her body, and so few her years, that Kumalo for all his suffering was moved to compassion.

—What will you do? he asked.

—I do not know, she said.

—Perhaps you will find another man, said Msimangu bitterly. And before Kumalo could speak, to steal away the bitterness and hide it from her—I do not know, she said.

And again before Kumalo could speak, Msimangu turned his back on the girl, and spoke to him privately.

—You can do nothing here, he said. Let us go.

—My friend . . .

—I tell you, you can do nothing. Have you not troubles enough of your own? I tell you there are thousands such in Johannesburg. And were your back as broad as heaven, and your purse full of gold, and did your compassion reach from here to hell itself, there is nothing you can do.

Silently they withdrew. All of them were silent, the young white man heavy with failure, the old man with grief, Msimangu still bitter with his words. Kumalo stood at the car though the others were already seated.

—You do not understand, he said. The child will be my grandchild.

—Even that you do not know, said Msimangu angrily. His bitterness mastered him again. And if he were, he said, how many more such have you? Shall



we search them out, day after day, hour after hour? Will it ever end?

Kumalo stood in the dust like one who has been struck. Then without speaking any more he took his seat in the car.

Again they stopped at the gate of the village, and the young white man got out and went into the office of the European superintendent. He came back, his face set and unhappy.

—I have telephoned the factory, he said. It is true. He has not been at work this week.

At the gates of Orlando they stopped yet again.

—Would you like to get out here? the young man asked. They climbed out, and the young man spoke to Kumalo.

—I am sorry for this, he said.

—Yes, it is very heavy. As if his English had left him, he spoke in Zulu to Msimangu.

—I am sorry too for this end to his work, he said.

—He too is sorry for this end to your work, said Msimangu in Afrikaans.

—Yes, it is my work, but it is his son. He turned to Kumalo and spoke in English. Let us not give up all hope, he said. It has happened sometimes that a boy is arrested, or is injured and taken to hospital, and we do not know. Do not give up hope, umfundisi. I will not give up the search.

They watched him drive away. He is a good man, said Kumalo. Come, let us walk.

But Msimangu did not move. I am ashamed to walk with you, he said. His face was twisted, like that of a man much distressed.

Kumalo looked at him astonished.

—I ask your forgiveness for my ugly words, said Msimangu.

—You mean about the search?

—You understood, then?

—I am old, and have learnt something. You are forgiven.

IT WAS a pleasant evening at the Mission House. Father Vincent, the rosy-cheeked priest, was there, and they talked about the place where Kumalo lived and worked. And the white man in his turn spoke about

his own country, about the hedges and the fields, and Westminster Abbey, and the great cathedrals up and down the land. Yet even this pleasure was not to be entire, for one of the white priests came in from the city with the *Evening Star*, and showed them the bold black lines. MURDER IN PARKWOLD. WELL-KNOWN CITY ENGINEER SHOT DEAD. ASSAILANTS THOUGHT TO BE NATIVES.

—This is a terrible loss for South Africa, said the white priest. For this Arthur Jarvis was a courageous young man, and a great fighter for justice. And it is a terrible loss for the Church too. He was one of the finest of all our young laymen.

—Jarvis? It is indeed a terrible thing, said Msimangu. He was the president of the African Boys' Club, here in Claremont, in Gladiolus Street.

—Perhaps you might have known him, said Father Vincent to Kumalo. It says that he was the only child of Mr. James Jarvis, of High Place, Carisbrooke.

—I know the father, said Kumalo sorrowfully. I mean I know him well by sight and name, but we have never spoken. His farm is in the hills above Ndotsheni, and he sometimes rode past our church. But I did not know the son.

He was silent, then he said, Yet I remember, there was a small bright boy, and he too sometimes rode on his horse past the church. A small bright boy, I remember, though I do not remember it well.

And he was silent again, for who is not silent when someone is dead, who was a small bright boy?

—Shall I read this? said Father Vincent.

At one-thirty p.m. today Mr. Arthur Jarvis, of Plantation Road, Parkwold, was shot dead in his house by an intruder, thought to be a native. It appears that Mrs. Jarvis and her two children were away for a short holiday, and that Mr. Jarvis had telephoned his partners to say that he would be staying at home with a slight cold. It would seem that a native, probably with two accomplices, entered by the kitchen, thinking no doubt that there would be no one in the house. The native servant in the kitchen was knocked unconscious, and it would appear that Mr. Jarvis heard the disturbance and came down to investigate. He was shot dead at short

range in the passageway leading from the stairs into the kitchen. There were no signs of any struggle.

Three native youths were seen lounging in Plantation Road shortly before the tragedy occurred, and a strong force of detectives was immediately sent to the scene. Exhaustive inquiries are being made, and the plantations on Parkwold Ridge are being combed. The native servant, Richard Mpiring, is lying unconscious in the Non-European Hospital, and it is hoped that when he regains consciousness he will be able to furnish the police with important information. His condition is serious however.

The sound of the shot was heard by a neighbour, Mr. Michael Clarke, who investigated promptly and made the tragic discovery. The police were on the scene within a few minutes. On the table by the bed of the murdered man was found an unfinished manuscript on "The Truth about Native Crime," and it would appear that he was engaged in writing it when he got up to go to his death. The bowl of a pipe on the table was found still to be warm.

Mr. Jarvis leaves a widow, a nine-year-old son, and a five-year-old daughter. He was the only son of Mr. James Jarvis, of High Place Farm, Carisbrooke, Natal, and a partner in the city engineering firm of Davis, van der Walt, and Jarvis. The dead man was well known for his interest in social problems, and for his efforts for the welfare of the non-European sections of the community.

There is not much talking now. A silence falls upon them all. This is no time to talk of hedges and fields, or the beauties of any country. Sadness and fear and hate, how they well up in the heart and mind, whenever one opens the pages of these messengers of doom. Cry for the broken tribe, for the law and the custom that is gone. Aye, and cry aloud for the man who is dead, for the woman and children bereaved. Cry, the beloved country, these things are not yet at an end. The sun pours down on the earth, on the lovely land that man cannot enjoy. He knows only the fear of his heart.

Kumalo rose. I shall go to my room, he said. Good night to you all.

—I shall walk with you, my friend.

They walked to the gate of the little house of Mrs. Lithebe. Kumalo lifted to his friend a face that was full of suffering.

—This thing, he said. This thing. Here in my heart there is nothing but fear. Fear, fear, fear.

—I understand. Yet it is nevertheless foolish to fear that one thing in this great city, with its thousands and thousands of people.

—It's not a question of wisdom and foolishness. It is just fear.

HAVE NO doubt it is fear in the land. For what can men do when so many have grown lawless? Who can enjoy the lovely land, who can enjoy the seventy years, and the sun that pours down on the earth, when there is fear in the heart? Who can walk quietly in the shadow of the jacarandas, when their beauty is grown to danger? Who can lie peacefully abed, while the darkness holds some secret? What lovers can lie sweetly under the stars, when menace grows with the measure of their seclusion?

There are voices crying what must be done, a hundred, a thousand voices.

But what do they help if one seeks for counsel, for one cries this, and one cries that, and another cries something that is neither this nor that.

—It's a crying scandal, ladies and gentlemen, that we get so few police. This suburb pays more in taxes than most of the suburbs of Johannesburg, and what do we get for it? A third-class police station, with one man on the beat, and one at the telephone. This is the second outrage of its kind in six months, and we must demand more protection. (*Applause.*)

—Mr. McLaren, will you read us your resolution?

—I say we shall always have native crime to fear until the native people of this country have worthy purposes to inspire them and worthy goals to work for. For it is only because they see neither purpose nor goal that they turn to drink and crime and prostitution. Which do we prefer, a law-abiding, industrious, and purposeful native people, or a lawless, idle, and purposeless people? The truth is that we do not know, for we fear them both. And so long as we vacillate, so long will we pay dearly for the dubious pleasure of not having to make up our minds. And the

answer does not lie, except temporarily, in more police and more protection. (*Applause.*)

—And you think, Mr. de Villiers, that increased schooling facilities would cause a decrease in juvenile delinquency amongst native children?

—I am sure of it, Mr. Chairman.

—Have you the figures for the percentage of children at school?

—In Johannesburg, Mr. Chairman, not more than four out of ten are at school. But of those four not even one will reach his sixth standard. Six are being educated in the streets.

—May I ask Mr. de Villiers a question, Mr. Chairman?

—By all means, Mr. Scott.

—Who do you think should pay for this schooling, Mr. de Villiers?

—We should pay for it. If we wait till native parents can pay for it, we will pay more heavily in other ways.

—Don't you think, Mr. de Villiers, that more schooling simply means cleverer criminals?

—I am sure that is not true.

—Let me give you a case. I had a boy working for me who had passed Standard Six. Perfect gentleman, bow-tie, hat to the side, and the latest socks. I treated him well and paid him well. Now do you know, Mr. de Villiers, that this self-same scoundrel

—We went to the Zoo Lake, my dear. But it's quite impossible. I really don't see why they can't have separate days for natives.

—I just don't go there any more on a Sunday, my dear. We take John and Penelope on some other day. But I like to be fair. Where can these poor creatures go?

—Why can't they make recreation places for them?

—When they wanted to make a recreation centre on part of the Hillside Golf Course, there was such a fuss that they had to drop it.

—But, my dear, it would have been impossible. The noise would have been incredible.

—So they stay on the pavements and hang about the corners. And believe me, the noise is just as incredible there too. But that needn't worry you where you live.

—Don't be catty, my dear. Why can't they put up big recreation centres somewhere, and let them all go free on the buses?

—Where, for example?

—You do persist, my dear. Why not in the City?

—And how long will it take them to get there? And how long to get back? How many hours do you give your servants off on a Sunday?

—Oh, it's too hot to argue. Get your racquet, my dear, they're calling us. Look, it's Mrs. Harvey and Thelma. You've got to play like a demon, do you hear?

And some cry for the cutting-up of South Africa without delay into separate areas, where white can live without black, and black without white, where black can farm their own land and mine their own minerals and administer their own laws.

And others cry away with the compound system, that brings men to the towns without their wives and children, and breaks up the tribe and the house and the man, and they ask for the establishment of villages for the labourers in mines and industry.

And the churches cry too. The English-speaking churches cry for more education, and more opportunity, and for a removal of the restrictions on native labour and enterprise. And the Afrikaans-speaking churches want to see the native people given opportunity to develop along their own lines, and remind their own people that the decay of family religion, where the servants took part in family devotions, has contributed in part to the moral decay of the native people. But there is to be no equality in church or state.

Yes, there are a hundred, and a thousand voices crying. But what does one do, when one cries this thing, and one cries another? Who knows how we shall fashion a land of peace where black outnumber white so greatly?

Some say that the earth has bounty enough for all, and that more for one does not mean less for another, that the advance of one does not mean the decline of another. They say that poor-paid labour means a poor nation, and that better-paid labour means greater markets and greater scope for industry and manufacture. And others say that this is

a danger, for better-paid labour will not only buy more but will also read more, think more, ask more, and will not be content to be for ever voiceless and inferior.

We do not know, we do not know. We shall live from day to day, and put more locks on the doors, and get a fine fierce dog, and hold on to our handbags more tenaciously; and the beauty of the trees by night, and the raptures of lovers under the stars, these things we shall forgo. We shall forgo the evening walk over the star-lit veld. We shall be careful, and knock this off our lives, and knock that off our lives, and hedge ourselves about with safety and precaution. And our lives will shrink, but they shall be the lives of superior beings; and we shall live with fear, but at least it will not be a fear of the unknown. And the conscience shall be thrust down; the light of life shall not be extinguished, but be put under a bushel, to be preserved for a generation that will live by it again, in some day not yet come; and how it will come, and when it will come, we shall not think about at all.

They are holding a meeting in Parkwold tonight, as they held one last night in Turffontein, and will hold one tomorrow night in Mayfair. And the people will ask for more police, and for heavier sentences for native housebreakers, and for the death penalty for all who carry weapons when they break in. And some will ask for a new native policy, that will show the natives who is the master.

And the Left Club is holding a meeting too, on "A Long-Term Policy for Native Crime," and has invited both European and non-European speakers to present a symposium. And the Cathedral Guild is holding a meeting too, on "The Real Causes of Native Crime." But there will be a gloom over it, for the speaker of the evening, Mr. Arthur Jarvis, has just been shot dead in his house at Parkwold.

Cry, the beloved country, for the unborn child that is the inheritor of our fear. Let him not love the earth too deeply. Let him not laugh too gladly when the water runs through his fingers, nor stand too silent when the setting sun makes red the veld with fire. Let him not be too

moved when the birds of his land are singing, nor give too much of his heart to a mountain or a valley. For fear will rob him of all if he gives too much.

—Mr. Msimangu?

—Ah, it is Mrs. Ndlela, of End Street.

—Mr. Msimangu, the police have been to me.

—The police?

—Yes, they want to know about the son of the old umfundisi. They are looking for him.

—For what, mother?

—They did not say, Mr. Msimangu.

—Is it bad, mother?

—It looks as if it were bad.

—And then, mother?

—I was frightened, umfundisi. So I gave them the address. Mrs. Mkize, 79 Twenty-Third Avenue, Alexandra. And one said yes, this woman was known to deal in heavy matters.

—You gave them the address?

He stood silent in the door.

—Did I do wrong, umfundisi?

—You did no wrong, mother.

—I was afraid.

—It is the law, mother. We must uphold the law.

—I am glad, umfundisi.

He thanks the simple woman, and tells her to go well. He stands for a moment, then turns swiftly and goes to his room. He takes out an envelope from a drawer, and takes paper money from it. He looks at it ruefully, and then with decision puts it into his pocket, with decision takes down his hat. Then dressed, with indecision looks out of the window to the house of Mrs. Lithebe, and shakes his head. But he is too late, for as he opens his door, Kumalo stands before him.

—You are going out, my friend?

Msimangu is silent.

—I was going out, he says at last.

—But you said you would work in your room today.

And Msimangu would have said, Can I not do as I wish, but something prevented him.

—Come in, he said.

—I would not disturb you, my friend.

—Come in, said Msimangu, and he shuts the door. My friend, I have just had a visit from Mrs. Ndlela, at the house we visited in End Street, here in Sophiatown.

Kumalo hears the earnest tones. There is news? he asks, but there is fear, not eagerness, in his voice.

—Only this, said Msimangu, that the police came to her house, looking for the boy. She gave them the address, Mrs. Mkize, at 79 Twenty-Third Avenue in Alexandra.

—Why do they want the boy? asked Kumalo in a low and trembling voice.

—That we do not know. I was ready to go there when you came.

Kumalo looked at him out of sad and grateful eyes, so that the resentment of the other died out of him. You were going alone? the old man asked.

—I was going alone, yes. But now that I have told you, you may come also.

—Mrs. Mkize!

She drew back, hostile.

—Have the police been here?

—They have been, not long since.

—And what did they want?

—They wanted the boy.

—And what did you say?

—I said it was a year since he left here.

—And where have they gone?

—To Shanty Town. She draws back again, remembering.

—To the address you did not know, he said coldly.

She looks at him sullenly. What could I do? she said. It was the police.

—No matter. What was the address?

—I did not know the address. Shanty Town, I told them.

Some fire came into her. I told you I did not know the address, she said.

—Mrs. Hlatshwayo!

The pleasant-faced woman smiled at them, and drew aside for them to enter the hessian house.

—We shall not come in. Have the police been here?

—They were here, umfundisi.

—And what did they want?

—They wanted the boy, umfundisi.

—For what, mother?

—I do not know, umfundisi.

—And where have they gone?

—To the school, umfundisi.

—Tell me, he said privately, did it seem heavy?

—I could not say, umfundisi.

—Stay well, Mrs. Hlatshwayo.

—Go well, umfundisi.

—Good morning, my friend.

—Good morning, umfundisi, said the native assistant at the reformatory.

—Where is the young white man?

—He is in the town. It was now, now, that he went.

—Have the police been here?

—They have been here. It was now, now, that they left.

—What did they want?

—They wanted the boy, Absalom Kumalo, the son of the old man there in the taxi.

—Why did they want him?

—I do not know. I had other work, and went out while they came in with the white man.

—Was the young white man—well, disturbed?

—He was disturbed.

—And where did they go?

—To Pimville, umfundisi. To the home of the girl.

—Have the police been here?

—They have been here, now, now, they were here.

—And what did they want?

—They wanted Absalom, umfundisi.

—And what did you tell them?

—I told them I had not seen him since Saturday, umfundisi.

—And why did they want him? cried Kumalo in torment.

She drew back frightened. I do not know, she said.

—And why did you not ask? he cried.

The tears filled her eyes. I was afraid, she said.

Msimangu went to the taxi, and Kumalo followed him. And the girl ran after them, as one runs who is with child.

—They told me I must let them know if he comes.

Her eyes were full of trouble. What shall I do? she said.

—That is what you ought to do, said Msimangu. And you will let us know also. Wait, you must go to the superintendent's office and ask him to telephone to the Mission House in Sophiatown. I shall write the number here for you. 49-3041.

—I shall do it, umfundisi.

—Tell me, did the police say where they would go?

—They did not say, umfundisi. But I heard them say, *die spoor loop dood*, the trail runs dead.

—Stay well, my child.

—Go well, umfundisi. She turned to say go well to the other, but he was already in the taxi, bowed over his stick.

THE FOLLOWING day Kumalo ate his midday meal at the Mission, and returned to Mrs. Lithebe's to play with Gertrude's son. There was great bargaining going on, for Mrs. Lithebe had found a buyer for Gertrude's table and chairs, and for the pots and pans. Everything was sold for three pounds, which was not a bad sum for a table that was badly

marked and discoloured, with what he did not ask. And the chairs too were weak, so that one had to sit carefully upon them. Indeed, the price was paid for the pots and pans, which were of the stuff called aluminium. Now the black people do not buy such pots and pans; but his sister said that they were the gift of a friend, and into that too he did not inquire.

When the last thing had been loaded, and the money paid, and the lorry had gone, he would have played with the small boy, but he saw, with the fear catching at him suddenly with a physical pain, Msimangu and the young white man from the reformatory walking up the street towards the house. With the habit born of experience, he forced himself to go to the gate, and noted with dread their set faces and the low tones in which they spoke.

—Good afternoon, umfundisi. Is there a place where we can talk? asked the young man.

—Come to my room, he said, hardly trusting to his voice.

In the room he shut the door, and stood not looking at them.

—I have heard what you fear, said the young man. It is true.

And Kumalo stood bowed, and could not look at them. He sat down in his chair and fixed his eyes upon the floor.

The young man shrugged his shoulders. This will be bad for the reformatory, he said more loudly, even indifferently.

And Kumalo nodded his head, not once, nor twice, but three or four times, as though he too would say, Yes, it will be bad for the reformatory.

—Yes, said the young man, it will be bad for us. They will say we let him out too soon. Of course, he said, there is one thing. The other two were not reformatory boys. But it was he who fired the shot.

—My friend, said Msimangu, in as ordinary a voice as he could find, one of the two others is the son of your brother.

And so Kumalo nodded his head again, one, two, three, four times. And when that was finished, he began, as though he too were saying, One of the two others is the son of my brother.

Then he stood up, and looked round the room, and they watched him. He took his coat from a nail, and put it on, and he put his hat on,

and took his stick in his hand. And so dressed he turned to them, and nodded again. But this time they did not know what he said.

—You are going out, my friend, said Msimangu.

—Do you wish to come to the prison, umfundisi? I have arranged it for you.

And Kumalo nodded. He turned and looked round the room again, and found that his coat was already on him, and his hat; he touched both coat and hat, and looked down at the stick that was in his hand.

—My brother first, he said, if you will show me the way only.

—I shall show you the way, my friend.

—And I shall wait at the Mission, said the young man.

Msimangu took his arm, and it was like walking with a child or with one that was sick. So they came to the shop of Kumalo's brother. And at the shop Kumalo turned, and closed his eyes, and his lips were moving. Then he opened his eyes and turned to Msimangu.

—Do not come farther, he said. It is I who must do this.

And then he went into the shop.

Yes, the bull voice was there, loud and confident. His brother John was sitting there on a chair, talking to two other men, sitting there like a chief.

—Good afternoon, my brother.

—Ah, my brother, it is you. Well, well, I am glad to see you. Will you not come and join us?

Kumalo looked at the visitors. I am sorry, he said, but I come again on business, urgent business.

—I am sure my friends will excuse us. Excuse us, my friends.

So they all said Stay well, and go well, and the two men left them.

—Well, well, I am glad to see you, my brother. And your business, how does it progress? Have you found the prodigal?

—He is found, my brother. He is in prison, arrested for the murder of a white man.

—Murder? The man does not jest now. One does not jest about murder. Still less about the murder of a white man.

—Yes, murder. He broke into a house in a place that they call Parkwold, and killed the white man who would have prevented him.

—What? I remember! Only a day or two since? On Tuesday?

—Yes.

—Yes, I remember.

Yes, he remembers. He remembers too that his own son and his brother's son are companions. The veins stand out on the bull neck, and the sweat forms on the brow. Have no doubt it is fear in the eyes. He wipes his brow with a cloth. There are many questions he could ask. All he says is, Yes, indeed, I do remember. His brother is filled with compassion for him. He will try gently to bring it to him.

—I am sorry, my brother.

What does one say? Does one say, Of course you are sorry? Does one say, Of course, it is your son? How can one say it, when one knows what it means? Keep silent then, but the eyes are upon one. One knows what they mean.

—You mean . . . ? he said, he asked.

—Yes. He was there also.

John Kumalo whispers *Tixo, Tixo*. And again, *Tixo, Tixo*. Kumalo comes to him and puts his hand on his shoulders.

—There are many things I could say, he said.

—There are many things you could say.

—But I do not say them. I say only that I know what you suffer.

—Indeed, who could know better?

—There is a young white man at the Mission, and he is waiting to take me now to the prison. Perhaps he would take you also.

—Let me get my coat and hat, my brother.

They set out along the street to the Mission House. Msimangu, watching anxiously for their return, sees them coming. The old man walks now more firmly, it is the other who seems bowed and broken.

Father Vincent, the rosy-cheeked priest from England, takes Kumalo's hand in both his own. Anything, he says, anything. You have only to ask. I shall do anything.

They pass through the great gate in the grim high wall. The young man from the reformatory talks for them, and it is arranged. John Kumalo is taken to one room, and the young man goes with Stephen

Kumalo to another. There the son is brought to them.

They shake hands, indeed the old man takes his son's hand in both his own, and the hot tears fall fast upon them. The boy stands unhappy, there is no gladness in his eyes. He twists his head from side to side, as though the loose clothing is too tight for him.

—My child, my child.

—Yes, my father.

—At last I have found you.

—Yes, my father.

—And it is too late.



To this the boy makes no answer. As though he may find some hope in this silence, the father presses him. Is it not too late? he asks. But there is no answer. Persistently, almost eagerly, Is it not too late? he asks. The boy turns his head from side to side, he meets the eyes of the young white man, and his own retreat swiftly. My father, it is what my father says, he answers.

—I have searched in every place for you.

To that also no answer. The old man loosens his hands, and his son's hand slips from them lifelessly. There is a barrier here, a wall, something that cuts off one from the other.

—Why did you do this terrible thing, my child?

The young white man stirs watchfully, the white warder makes no sign, perhaps he does not know this tongue. There is a moisture in the boy's eyes, he turns his head from side to side, and makes no answer.

—Answer me, my child.

—I do not know, he says.

—Why did you carry a revolver?

The white warder stirs too, for the word in Zulu is like the word in English and in Afrikaans. The boy too shows a sign of life.

—For safety, he says. This Johannesburg is a dangerous place. A man never knows when he will be attacked.

—But why did you take it to this house?

And this again cannot be answered.

—Have they got it, my child?

—Yes, my father.

—They have no doubt it was you?

—I told them, my father.

—What did you tell them?

—I told them I was frightened when the white man came. So I shot him. I did not mean to kill him.

—And your cousin. And the other?

—Yes, I told them. They came with me, but it was I who shot the white man.

—Did you go there to steal?

And this again cannot be answered.

—You were at the reformatory, my child?

The boy looked at his boot, and pushed it forward along the ground. I was there, he said.

—Did they treat you well?

Again there is a moisture in the eyes, again he turns his head from side to side, drops his eyes again to the boot pushing forward and backward on the ground. They treated me well, he said.

—And this is your repayment, my child?

And this again cannot be answered. The young white man comes over, for he knows that this does nothing, goes nowhere. Perhaps he does not like to see these two torturing each other.

—Well, Absalom?

—Sir?

—Why did you leave the work that I got for you?

And you too young man can get no answer. There are no answers to these things.

—And your girl. The one we let you go to, the girl you worried over, so that we took pity on you.

And again the tears in the eyes. Who knows if he weeps for the girl he has deserted? Who knows if he weeps for a promise broken? Who knows if he weeps for another self, that would work for a woman, pay his taxes, save his money, keep the laws, love his children, another self that has always been defeated? Or does he weep for himself alone, to be let alone, to be free of the merciless rain of questions, why, why, why, when he knows not why? They do not speak with him, they do not jest with him, they do not sit and let him be, but they ask, ask, ask, why, why, why?—his father, the white man, the prison officers, the police, the magistrates,—why, why, why?

The young white man shrugs his shoulders, smiles indifferently. But he is not indifferent, there is a mark of pain between his eyes.

—So the world goes, he says.

—Answer me one thing, my child. Will you answer me?

—I can answer, father.

—You wrote nothing, sent no message. You went with bad companions. You stole and broke in and—yes, you did these things. But why?

The boy seizes upon the word that is given him. It was bad companions, he said.

—I need not tell you that is no answer, said Kumalo. But he knows he will get no other this way. Yes, I see, he said, bad companions. Yes, I understand. But for you, yourself, what made you yourself do it?

How they torture one another. And the boy, tortured, shows again a sign of life.

—It was the devil, he said.

Oh boy, can you not say you fought the devil, wrestled with the devil, struggled with him night and day, till the sweat poured from you and no strength was left? Can you not say that you wept for your sins, and vowed to make amends, and stood upright, and stumbled, and fell again? It would be some comfort for this tortured man, who asks you, desperately, why did you not struggle against him?

And the boy looks down at his feet again, and says, I do not know.

The old man is exhausted, the boy is exhausted, and the time is nearly over. The young white man comes to them again. Does he still wish to marry the girl? he asks Kumalo.

—Do you wish to marry this girl, my son?

—Yes, my father.

—I shall see what I can do, says the young man, I think it is time for us to go.

—May we come again?

—Yes, you may come again. We shall ask the hours at the gate.

—Stay well, my child.

—Go well, my father.

—My child, I think you may write letters here. But do not write to your mother till I see you again. I must first write to her.

—It is good, my father.

They go, and outside the gate they meet John Kumalo. He is feeling better, the big bull man. Well, well, he says, we must go at once and see a lawyer.

—A lawyer, my brother? For what should we spend such money? The story is plain, there cannot be doubt about it.

—What is the story? asks John Kumalo.

—The story? These three lads went to a house that they thought was empty. They struck down the servant. The white man heard a noise and he came to see. And then . . . and then . . . my son . . . mine, not yours . . . shot at him. He was afraid, he says.

—Well, well, says John Kumalo, that is a story. He seems reassured. Well, well, he says, that is a story. And he told you this in front of the others?

—Why not, if it is the truth?

John Kumalo seems reassured. Perhaps you do not need a lawyer, he said. If he shot the white man, there is perhaps nothing more to be said.

—Will you have a lawyer then?

John Kumalo smiles at his brother. Perhaps I shall need a lawyer, he says. For one thing, a lawyer can talk to my son in private.

He seems to think, then he says to his brother, You see, my brother, there is no proof that my son or this other young man was there at all.

Yes, John Kumalo smiles at that, he seems quite recovered.

—Not there at all? But my son . . .

—Yes, yes, John Kumalo interrupts him, and smiles at him. "Who will believe your son?" he asks. He says it with meaning, with cruel and pitiless meaning.

Kumalo looks at his brother, but his brother does not look at him. Indeed he walks away. Wearily, wearily, Kumalo goes from the great gate in the wall to the street. *Tixo*, he says, *Tixo*, forsake me not. Father Vincent's words come back to him, Anything, anything, he said, you have only to ask. Then to Father Vincent he will go.

KUMALO returned to Mrs. Lithebe's, tired and dispirited. The two women were silent, and he had no desire to speak to them, and none to play with his small nephew. He withdrew into his room, and sat silent there, waiting till he could summon strength enough to go to the Mission House. But while he sat, there was a knock at his door, and Mrs. Lithebe stood there with the young white man.

Kumalo stood up, an old bowed man. He sought for humble and pleading words, but none came to him. And because he could not look at the young man, he fixed his eyes on the floor.

—Umfundisi.

—Sir?

The young man said, I think you must have a lawyer. Not because the truth must not be told, but because I do not trust your brother. You can see what is in his mind. His plan is to deny that his son and the third man were with your son. Now you and I do not know whether that will make matters worse or not, but a lawyer would know. And another thing also, Absalom says that he fired the revolver because he was afraid, with no intention of killing the white man. It needs a lawyer to make the court believe that that is true.

—Yes, I see that.

—Do you know of any lawyer, of your Church maybe?

—No, sir, I do not. But it was my plan to go to see Father Vincent at the Mission House, when I had rested for a while.

So they walked to the Mission House, and were shown into Father Vincent's room, and there they talked for a long time with the rosy-cheeked priest from England.

—I think I could get a good man to take the case, said Father Vincent. I think we are all agreed that it is to be the truth and nothing but the truth, and that the defence will be that the shot was fired in fear and not to kill. Our lawyer will tell us what to do about this other matter, the possibility, my friend, that your nephew and the other young man will deny they were there. For it appears it is only your son who states they were there. For us it is to be the truth, and nothing but the truth, and indeed, the man I am thinking of would not otherwise take the case. I shall see him as soon as possible.

—And what about the marriage, asked the young man.

—I shall ask him about that also. I do not know if it can be arranged, but I should gladly marry them if it can be.

So they rose to separate, and Father Vincent put his hand on the old man's arm.

—Be of good courage, he said. Whatever happens, your son will be severely punished, but if his defence is accepted, it will not be the extreme punishment. And while there is life, there is hope for amendment of life.

—That is now always in my mind, said Kumalo. But my hope is little.

—Stay here and speak with me, said Father Vincent.

—And I must go, said the young white man. But, umfundisi, I am ready to help if my help is needed.

When the young man had gone, Kumalo and the English priest sat down, and Kumalo said to the other, You can understand that this has been a sorrowful journey.

—I understand that, my friend.

—At first it was a search. I was anxious at first, but as the search went on, step by step, so did the anxiety turn to fear, and this fear grew deeper step by step. It was at Alexandra that I first grew afraid, but it was here in your House, when we heard of the murder, that my fear grew into something too great to be borne.

—To think, said Kumalo, that my wife and I lived out our lives in

innocence, there in Ndotsheni, not knowing that this thing was coming, step by step.

—Why, he said, if one could only have been told, this step is taken, and this step is about to be taken. If only one could have been told that. But we were not told.

Father Vincent put his hand over his eyes, to hide them from the light, to hide them from the sight of the man who was speaking.

—There is a man sleeping in the grass, said Kumalo. And over him is gathering the greatest storm of all his days. Such lightning and thunder will come there as have never been seen before, bringing death and destruction. People hurry home past him, to places safe from danger. And whether they do not see him there in the grass, or whether they fear to halt even a moment, but they do not wake him, they let him be.

After that Kumalo seemed to have done with speaking, and they were silent a long time till Father Vincent said again, My friend.

—Father?

—My friend, your anxiety turned to fear, and your fear turned to sorrow. But sorrow is better than fear. For fear impoverishes always, while sorrow may enrich.

Kumalo looked at him, with an intensity of gaze that was strange in so humble a man, and hard to encounter.

—I do not know that I am enriched, he said.

—Sorrow is better than fear, said Father Vincent doggedly. Fear is a journey, a terrible journey, but sorrow is at least an arriving.

—And where have I arrived? asked Kumalo.

—No one can comprehend the ways of God, said Father Vincent desperately.

Kumalo looked at him, not bitterly or accusingly or reproachfully.

—It seems that God has turned from me, he said.

—That may seem to happen, said Father Vincent. But it does not happen, never, never, does it happen. Go and pray, go and rest.

Kumalo stood up. I have no hope any more. What did you say I must do? Yes, pray and rest.

There was no mockery in his voice, and Father Vincent knew that it was not in this man's nature to speak mockingly. But so mocking were

the words that the white priest caught him by the arm, and said to him urgently, Sit down, I must speak to you as a priest.

When Kumalo had sat down, Father Vincent said to him, Yes, I said pray and rest. Even if it is only words that you pray, and even if your resting is only a lying on a bed. And do not pray for yourself, and do not pray to understand the ways of God. For they are secret. Who knows what life is, for life is a secret. And why you go on, when it would seem better to die, that is a secret. Do not pray and think about these things now, there will be other times. Pray for Gertrude, and for her child, and for the girl that is to be your son's wife, and for the child that will be your grandchild. Pray for your wife and all at Ndotsheni. Pray for the woman and the children that are bereaved. Pray for the soul of him who was killed. Pray for all white people, those who do justice, and those who would do justice if they were not afraid. And do not fear to pray for your son, and for his amendment.

—I hear you, said Kumalo humbly.

—And give thanks where you can give thanks. For nothing is better. Is there not your wife, and Mrs. Lithebe, and Msimangu, and this young white man at the reformatory? Now, for your son and his amendment, you will leave this to me and Msimangu; for you are too distraught to see God's will. And now, my son, go and pray, go and rest.

He helped the old man to his feet, and gave him his hat. And when Kumalo would have thanked him, he said, We do what is in us, and why it is in us, that is also a secret. It is Christ in us, crying that men may be succoured and forgiven, even when He Himself is forsaken.

The next day Kumalo, who was learning to find his way about the great city, took train to Pimville to see the girl who was with child by his son. He chose this time so that Msimangu would not be able to accompany him, because he felt he would do it better alone. He thought slowly and acted slowly, no doubt because he lived in the slow tribal rhythm; and he had seen that this could irritate those who were with him, and he had felt also that he could reach his goal more surely without them.

He found the house not without difficulty, and knocked at the door, and the girl opened to him. And she smiled at him uncertainly, with

something that was fear, and with something that was childlike and welcoming.

—And how are you, my child?

—I am well, umfundisi.

He sat down on the only chair in the room, sat down carefully on it, and wiped his brow.

—Have you heard of your husband? he asked. Only the word does not quite mean husband.

The smile went from her face. I have not heard, she said.

—What I have to say is heavy, he said. He is in prison.

—In prison? she said.

—He is in prison, for the most terrible deed that a man can do.

But the girl did not understand him. She waited patiently for him to continue. She was surely but a child.

—He has killed a white man.

—Au! The exclamation burst from her. She put her hands over her face. And Kumalo himself could not continue, for the words were like knives, cutting into a wound that was still new and open. She sat down on a box, and looked at the floor, and the tears started to run slowly down her cheeks.

—I do not wish to speak of it, my child. Can you read? The white man's newspaper?

—A little.

—Then I shall leave it with you. But do not show it to others.

—I shall not show it to others, umfundisi.

—I do not wish to speak of it any more. I have come to speak with you of another matter. Do you wish to marry my son?



—It is as the umfundisi sees it.

—I am asking you, my child.

—I can be willing.

—And why would you be willing?

She looked at him, for she could not understand such a question.

—Why do you wish to marry him? he persisted.

She picked little strips of wood from the box, smiling in her perplexedness. He is my husband, she said, with the word that does not quite mean husband.

—But you did not wish to marry him before?

The questions embarrassed her; she stood up, but there was nothing to do, and she sat down again, and fell to picking at the box.

—Speak, my child.

—I do not know what to say, umfundisi.

—Is it truly your wish to marry him?

—It is truly my wish, umfundisi.

—I must be certain. I do not wish to take you into my family if you are unwilling.

At those words she looked up at him eagerly. I am willing, she said.

—We live in a far place, he said. There are no streets and lights and buses there. There is only me and my wife, and the place is very quiet.

—I understand, umfundisi.

—I must say a hard thing to you.

—I am listening, umfundisi.

—What will you do in this quiet place when the desire is upon you? I am a parson, and live at my church, and our life is quiet and ordered. I do not wish to ask you something that you cannot do.

—I understand, umfundisi. I understand completely. She looked at him through her tears. You shall not be ashamed of me. You need not be afraid for me. You need not be afraid because it is quiet. Quietness is what I desire.

And the word, the word desire, quickened her to brilliance. That shall be my desire, she said, that is the desire that will be upon me, so that he was astonished.

—You are cleverer than I thought, he said.

—I was clever at school, she said eagerly.

He was moved to sudden laughter, and stood wondering at the strangeness of its sound.

—What church are you?

—Church of England, umfundisi . . . this too, eagerly.

He laughed again at her simplicity, and was as suddenly solemn. I want one promise from you, he said, a heavy promise.

And she too was solemn. Yes, umfundisi?

—If you should ever repent of this plan, either here or when we are gone to my home, you must not shut it up inside you, or run away. You will promise to tell me that you have repented.

—I promise, she said gravely, and then eagerly, I shall never repent.

And so he laughed again, and let go her hands, and took up his hat. I shall come for you when everything is ready for the marriage. Have you clothes?

—I have some clothes, umfundisi. I shall prepare them.

—And you must not live here. Shall I find you a place near me?

—I would wish that, umfundisi. She clapped her hands like a child. Let it be soon, she said, and I shall give up my room at this house.

—Stay well, then, my child.

—Go well, umfundisi.

He went out of the house, and she followed him to the little gate. When he turned back to look at her, she was smiling at him. He walked on like a man from whom a pain has lifted a little, not altogether, but a little. He remembered too that he had laughed, and that it had pained him physically, as it pains a man who is ill and should not laugh. And he remembered too, with sudden and devastating shock, that Father Vincent had said, I shall pray, night and day. At the corner he turned and, looking back, saw that the girl was still watching him.

—**M**^{RS. LITHEBE.} —Umfundisi?

—Mrs. Lithebe, you have been so kind, and I have another kindness to ask you.

—Perhaps it can be done.

—Mrs. Lithebe, you have heard of this girl who is with child by my son. *

—I have heard of her.

—She lives in Pimville, in a room in the house of other people. She wishes to marry my son, and I believe it can be arranged. Then—whatever may happen—she will go with me to Ndotsheni, and bear her child there in a clean and decent home. But I am anxious to get her away from this place, and I wondered . . . I do not like to trouble you, mother.

—You would like to bring her here, umfundisi?

—Indeed, that would be a great kindness. *

—I will take her, said Mrs. Lithebe. She can sleep in the room where we eat. But I have no bed for her.

—That would not matter. It is better for her to sleep on the floor of a decent house, than to——

—Indeed, indeed.

—Mother, I am grateful. Indeed you are a mother to me.

—Why else do we live? she said.

He passed again through the great gate in the grim high wall, and they brought the boy to him. Again he took the lifeless hand in his own, and was again moved to tears, this time by the dejection of his son.

—Are you in health, my son?

The son stood and moved his head to one side, and looked for a while at the one window, and then moved and looked at the other, but not at his father.

—I am in health, my father.

—I have some business for you, my son. Are you certain that you wish to marry this girl?

—I can marry her.

—There is a friend of mine, a white priest, and he will see if it can be arranged, and he will see the Bishop to see if it can be done quickly. And he will get a lawyer for you.

There is a spark of life in the eyes, of some hope maybe.

—You would like a lawyer?

—They say one can be helped by a lawyer.

—You told the police that these other two were with you?

—I told them. And now I have told them again.

—And then?

—And then they were angry with me, and cursed me in front of the police, and said that I was trying to bring them into trouble.

—And then?

—And then they asked what proof I had. And the only proof I had was that it was true, it was these two and no other and they stood there with me in the house, I here and they yonder.

He showed his father with his hands, and the tears came into his eyes, and he said, Then they cursed me again, and stood looking angrily at me, and said one to the other, How can he lie so about us?

—They were your friends?

—Yes, they were my friends.

—And they will leave you to suffer alone?

—Now I see it.

—And until this, were they friends you could trust?

—I could trust them.

—I see what you mean. You mean they were the kind of friends that a good man could choose, upright, hard-working, obeying the law?

Old man, leave him alone. You lead him so far and then you spring upon him. He looks at you sullenly, soon he will not answer at all.

—Tell me, were they such friends?

But the boy made no answer.

—And now they leave you alone?

Silence, then—I see it, said the boy.

—Did you not see it before?

Reluctantly the boy said, I saw it. The old man was tempted to ask, Then why, why did you continue with them? But the boy's eyes were filled with tears, and the father's compassion struggled with the temptation and overcame it.

He took his son's hands, and this time they were not quite lifeless, but there was some feeling in them, and he held them strongly and comfortingly.

—Be of courage, my son. Do not forget there is a lawyer. But it is only the truth you must tell him.

—I shall tell him only the truth, my father. He opened his mouth as though there were something he would say, but he did not say it.

—Do not fear to speak, my son.

—He must come soon, my father. He looked at the window, and his eyes filled again with tears. He tried to speak carelessly. Or it may be too late, he said.

—Have no fear of that. He will come soon. Shall I go now to see when he will come?

—Go now, soon, soon, my father.

—And Father Vincent will come to see you, so that you can make confession and amend your life.

—It is good, my father.

—And the marriage, that will be arranged if we can arrange it. And the girl—she will live with me in Sophiatown. And she will come back with me to Ndotsheni, and the child will be born there.

—It is good, my father.

—And you may write now to your mother.

—I shall write, my father.

—And wipe away your tears.

The boy stood up and wiped his eyes with the cloth that his father gave him. And they shook hands, and there was some life now in the hand of the boy. The warder said to the boy, You may stay here, there is a lawyer to see you. You, old man, you must go.

So Kumalo left him, and at the door stood a white man, ready to come in. He was tall and grave, like a man used to heavy matters, and the warder knew him and showed him much respect. He looked like a man used to great matters, much greater than the case of a black boy who has killed a man, and he went gravely into the room, even as a chief would go.

Kumalo returned to the Mission House, and there had tea with Father Vincent. After the tea was over there was a knock at the door, and the tall grave man was shown into the room. And Father Vincent treated

him also with respect, and called him sir, and then Mr. Carmichael. He introduced Kumalo to him, and Mr. Carmichael shook hands with him, and called him Mr. Kumalo, which is not the custom. They had more tea, and fell to discussing the case.

—I shall take it for you, Mr. Kumalo, said Mr. Carmichael. I shall take it *pro deo*, as we say. It is a simple case, for the boy says simply that he fired because he was afraid, not meaning to kill. And it will depend entirely on the judge and his assessors, for I think we will ask for that, and not for a jury. But with regard to the other two boys, I do not know what to say. I hear, Mr. Kumalo, that your brother has found another lawyer for them, and indeed I could not defend them, for I understand that their defence will be that they were not there at all and that your son is, for reasons of his own, trying to implicate them. Whether that is true or not will be for the Court to decide, but I incline to the opinion that your son is speaking the truth, and has no motive for trying to implicate them. It is for me to persuade the Court that he is speaking the whole truth, and that he speaks the whole truth when he says that he fired because he was afraid, and therefore I obviously could not defend these two who maintain that he is not speaking the truth. Is that clear, Mr. Kumalo?

—It is clear, sir.

—I must have all the facts about your son, Mr. Kumalo, when and where he was born, and what sort of child he was, and whether he was obedient and truthful, and when and why he left home, and what he has done since he first came to Johannesburg. You understand?

—I understand, sir.

—And now, Father Vincent, could you and I go into this matter of the school?

—With pleasure, sir. Mr. Kumalo, will you excuse us?

He took Kumalo to the door, and standing outside it, shut it.

—You may thank God that we have got this man, he said. He is a great man, and one of the greatest lawyers in South Africa, and one of the greatest friends of your people.

—I do thank God, and you too, Father. But tell me, I have one anxiety, what will it cost? My little money is nearly exhausted.

—Did you not hear him say he would take the case *pro deo*? It is Latin, and it means for God. So it will cost you nothing, or at least very little.

—He takes it for God?

—That is what it meant in the old days of faith, though it has lost much of that meaning. But it still means that the case is taken for nothing.

Kumalo stammered. I have never met such kindness, he said. He turned away his face, for he wept easily in those days. Father Vincent smiled at him. Go well, he said, and went back to the lawyer who was taking the case for God.

THERE is a lovely road that runs from Ixopo into the hills. These hills are grass-covered and rolling, and they are lovely beyond any singing of it.

Up here on the tops is a small and lovely valley, between two hills that shelter it.

There is a house there, and flat ploughed fields; they will tell you that it is one of the finest farms of this countryside. It is called High Place, the farm and dwelling-place of James Jarvis, Esquire, and it stands high above Ndotsheni, and the great valley of the Umzimkulu.

Jarvis watched the ploughing with a gloomy eye. The hot afternoon sun of October poured down on the fields, and there was no cloud in the sky. Rain, rain, there was no rain. The clods turned up hard and unbroken, and here and there the plough would ride uselessly over the iron soil. At the end of the field it stopped, and the oxen stood sweating and blowing in the heat.

—It is no use, umnumzana.

—Keep at it, Thomas. I shall go up to the tops and see what there is to see.

—You will see nothing, umnumzana. I know because I have looked already.

Jarvis grunted and, calling his dog, set out along the kaffir path that led up to the tops. There was no sign of drought there, for the grass was fed by the mists, and the breeze blew coolingly on his sweating face.

But below the tops the grass was dry, and the hills of Ndotsheni were red and bare, and the farmers on the tops had begun to fear that the desolation of them would eat back, year by year, mile by mile, until they too were overtaken.

It was a problem almost beyond solution. Some people said there must be more education of the natives, but a boy with education did not want to work on the farms, and went off to the towns to look for more congenial occupation. The work was done by old men and women, and when the grown men came back from the mines and the towns, they sat in the sun and drank their liquor and made endless conversation. Some said there was too little land anyway, and that the natives could not support themselves on it, even with the most progressive methods of agriculture.

But there were many sides to such a question. For if they got more land, and treated it as they treated what they had already, the country would turn into a desert. And where was the land to come from, and who would pay for it?

Jarvis turned these old thoughts over in his mind as he climbed to the tops, and when he reached them he sat down on a stone and took off his hat, letting the breeze cool him. This was a view that a man could look at without tiring of it, this great valley of the Umzimkulu. He could look round on the green rich hills that he had inherited from his father, and down on the rich valley where he lived and farmed. It had been his wish that his son, the only child that had been born to them, would have taken it after him. But the young man had entertained other ideas, and had gone in for engineering, and well—good luck to him. He had married a fine girl, and had presented his parents with a pair of fine grandchildren. It had been a heavy blow when he decided against High Place, but his life was his own, and no other man had a right to put his hands on it.

Down in the valley below there was a car going up to the house. He recognized it as the police car from Ixopo, and it would probably be Binnendyk on his patrol, and a decent fellow for an Afrikaner. Indeed Ixopo was full of Afrikaners now, whereas once there had been none of them. For all the police were Afrikaners, and the post-office clerks, and



the men at the railway station, and the village people got on well with them one way and the other.

His wife was coming out of the house to meet the car, and there were two policemen climbing out of it. One looked like the captain himself, van Jaarsveld, one of the most popular men in the village, a great rugby-player in his day, and a soldier of the Great War. They seemed to have come to see him, for his wife was pointing up to the tops. He called his dog, and set out along the path that would soon drop down steeply among the stones. When he reached a little plateau about half-way down to the fields, he found that van Jaarsveld and Binnendyk were already climbing the slope, and saw that they had brought their car down the rough track to the ploughing. They caught sight of him, and he waved to them, and sat down upon a stone to wait for them. Binnendyk dropped behind, and the captain came on above to meet him.

—Well, captain, have you brought some rain for us?

The captain stopped and turned to look over the valley to the mountains beyond.

—I don't see any, Mr. Jarvis, he said.

—Neither do I. What brings you out today?

They shook hands, and the captain looked at him.

—Mr. Jarvis.

—Yes.

—I have bad news for you.

—Bad news?

Jarvis sat down, his heart beating loudly. Is it my son? he asked.

—Yes, Mr. Jarvis.

—Is he dead?

—Yes, Mr. Jarvis. The captain paused. He was shot dead at one-thirty this afternoon in Johannesburg.

Jarvis stood up, his mouth quivering. Shot dead? he asked. By whom?

—It is suspected by a native housebreaker. You know his wife was away?

—Yes, I knew that.

—And he stayed at home for the day, a slight indisposition. I suppose this native thought no one was at home. It appears that your son heard a noise, and came down to investigate. The native shot him dead. There was no sign of any struggle.

—My God!

—I'm sorry, Mr. Jarvis. I'm sorry to have to bring this news to you.

He offered his hand, but Jarvis had sat down again on the stone, and did not see it. My God, he said.

Van Jaarsveld stood silent while the older man tried to control himself.

—You didn't tell my wife, captain?

—No, Mr. Jarvis.

Jarvis knitted his brows as he thought of that task that must be performed. She isn't strong, he said. I don't know how she will stand it.

—Mr. Jarvis, I am instructed to offer you every assistance. Binnendyk can drive your car to Pietermaritzburg if you wish. You could catch the fast mail at nine o'clock. You will be in Johannesburg at eleven tomorrow morning. There's a private compartment reserved for you and Mrs. Jarvis.

—That was kind of you.

—I'll do anything you wish, Mr. Jarvis.

—What time is it?

—Half-past three, Mr. Jarvis.

—Two hours ago.

—Yes, Mr. Jarvis.

—Three hours ago he was alive.

—Yes, Mr. Jarvis.

—My God!

—If you are to catch this train, you should leave at six. Or if you wish, you could take an aeroplane. There's one waiting at Pietermaritzburg. But we must let them know by four o'clock. You could be in Johannesburg at midnight.

—Yes, yes. You know, I cannot think.

—Yes, I can understand that.

—Which would be better?

—I think the aeroplane, Mr. Jarvis.

—Well, we'll take it. We must let them know, you say.

—I'll do that as soon as we get to the house. Can I telephone where Mrs. Jarvis won't hear me? I must hurry, you see.

—Yes, yes, you can do that.

—I think we should go.

But Jarvis sat without moving.

—Can you stand up, Mr. Jarvis? I don't want to help you. Your wife's watching us.

—She's wondering, captain. Even at this distance, she knows something is wrong.

—It's quite likely. Something she saw in my face, perhaps, though I tried not to show it.

Jarvis stood up. My God, he said. There's still that to do.

As they walked down the steep path, Binnendyk went ahead of them. Jarvis walked like a dazed man. Out of a cloudless sky these things come.

—Shot dead? he said.

—Yes, Mr. Jarvis.



—Did they catch the natives?

—Not yet, Mr. Jarvis.

The tears filled the eyes, the teeth bit the lips. What does that matter? he said. They walked down the hill, they were near the field. Through the misted eyes he saw the plough turn over the clods, then ride high over the iron ground. Leave it, Thomas, he said. He was our only child, captain.

—I know that, Mr. Jarvis.

They climbed into the car, and in a few minutes were at the house.

—James, what's the matter?

—Some trouble, my dear. Come with me to the office. Captain, you want to use the telephone. You know where it is?

—Yes, Mr. Jarvis.

The captain went to the telephone. It was a party-line, and two neighbours were talking.

—Please put down your receivers, said the captain. This is an urgent call from the police. Please put down your receivers.

He rang viciously, and got no answer. There should be a special police call to exchange on these country lines. He would see about it. He rang more viciously. Exchange, he said, Police Pietermaritzburg. It is very urgent.

—You will be connected immediately, said exchange.

He started to talk to Pietermaritzburg about the aeroplane. His hand felt for the second ear-piece, so that he could use that also, to shut out the sound of the woman, of her crying and sobbing.

A YOUNG man met them at the airport. —Mr. and Mrs. Jarvis?

—Yes.

—I'm John Harrison, Mary's brother. I don't think you remember me. I was only a youngster when you saw me last. Let me carry your things. I've a car here for you.

As they walked to the control building, the young man said, I needn't tell you how grieved we are, Mr. Jarvis. Arthur was the finest man I ever knew.

In the car he spoke to them again. Mary and the children are at my mother's and we're expecting you both to stay with us.

—How is Mary?

—She's suffering from the shock, Mr. Jarvis, but she's very brave.

—And the children?

—They've taken it very badly, Mr. Jarvis. And that has given Mary something to occupy herself.

They did not speak again. Jarvis held his wife's hand, but they were all silent with their own thoughts, until they drove through the gates of a suburban house, and came to a stop before a lighted porch. A young woman came out at the sound of the car, and embraced Mrs. Jarvis, and they wept together. Then she turned to Jarvis, and they embraced each other. This first meeting over, Mr. and Mrs. Harrison came out also, and after they had welcomed one another, and after the proper words had been spoken, they all went into the house.

Harrison turned to Jarvis. Would you like a drink? he asked.

—It would be welcome.

—Come to my study, then.

—And now, said Harrison, you must do as you wish. If there's anything we can do, you've only to ask us. If you wish to go to the mortuary at once, John will go with you. Or you can go tomorrow morning if you wish. The police would like to see you, but they won't worry you tonight.

—I'll ask my wife, Harrison. You know, we've hardly spoken of it yet. I'll go to her, don't you worry to come.

—I'll wait for you here.

He found his wife and his daughter-in-law hand in hand, tiptoeing out of the room where his grandchildren were sleeping. He spoke to her, and she wept again and sobbed against him. Now, she said. He went back to Harrison, and swallowed his drink, and then he and his wife and their daughter-in-law went out to the car, where John Harrison was waiting for them.

While they were driving to the police laboratories, John Harrison told Jarvis all that he knew about the crime, how the police were waiting for the house-boy to recover consciousness, and how they had combed the

plantations on Parkwold Ridge. And he told him too of the paper that Arthur Jarvis had been writing, just before he was killed, on "The Truth About Native Crime."

—I'd like to see it, said Jarvis.

—We'll get it for you tomorrow, Mr. Jarvis.

—My son and I didn't see eye to eye on the native question, John. In fact, he and I got quite heated about it on more than one occasion. But I'd like to see what he wrote.

—My father and I don't see eye to eye on the native question either, Mr. Jarvis. You know, Mr. Jarvis, there was no one in South Africa who thought so deeply about it, and no one who thought so clearly, as Arthur did. And what else is there to think deeply and clearly about in South Africa? he used to say.

So they came to the laboratories, and John Harrison stayed in the car, while the others went to do the hard thing that had to be done. And they came out silent but for the weeping of the two women, and drove back as silently to the house, where Mary's father opened the door to them.

—Another drink, Jarvis. Or do you want to go to bed?

—Margaret, do you want me to come up with you?

—No, my dear, stay and have your drink.

—Good night then, my dear.

—Good night, James.

He kissed her, and she clung to him for a moment. And thank you for all your help, she said. The tears came again into her eyes, and into his too for that matter. He watched her climb the stairs with their daughter-in-law, and when the door closed on them, he and Harrison turned to go to the study.

—It's always worse for the mother, Jarvis.

—Yes.

He pondered over it, and said then, I was very fond of my son. I was never ashamed of having him.

They settled down to their drinks, and Harrison told him that the murder had shocked the people of Parkwold, and how the messages had poured into the house.

—Messages from every conceivable place, every kind of person, he

said. By the way, Jarvis, we arranged the funeral provisionally for tomorrow afternoon, after a service in the Parkwold Church. Three o'clock the service will be.

Jarvis nodded. Thank you, he said.

—And we kept all the messages for you. From the Bishop, and the Acting Prime Minister, and the Mayor, and from dozens of others. And from native organizations too, something called the Daughters of Africa, and a whole lot of others that I can't remember. And from coloured people, and Indians, and Jews.

Jarvis felt a sad pride rising in him. He was clever, he said. That came from his mother.

—He was that right enough—you must hear John on it. But people liked him too, all sorts of people. You know he spoke Afrikaans like an Afrikaner?

—I knew he had learnt it.

—It's a lingo I know nothing about, thank God. But he thought he ought to know it, so he took lessons in it, and went to an Afrikaner farm. He spoke Zulu as you know, but he was talking of learning Sesuto. There was talk of getting him to stand at the next election.

—I didn't know that.

—Yes, he was always speaking here and there. You know the kind of thing. Native Crime, and more Native Schools, and he kicked up a hell of a dust in the papers about the conditions at the Non-European Hospital. And you know he was hot about the native compound system in the Mines, and wanted the Chamber to come out one hundred per cent for settled labour—you know, wife and family to come with the man.

Jarvis filled his pipe slowly, and listened to this tale of his son, to this tale of a stranger.

—Hathaway of the Chamber of Mines spoke to me about it, said Harrison. Asked me if I wouldn't warn the lad to pipe down a bit, because his firm did a lot of business with the Mines. So I spoke to him, told him I knew he felt deeply about these things, but asked him to go slow a bit. Told him there was Mary to consider, and the children. I didn't speak on behalf of Mary, you understand? I don't poke my nose into young people's business.

—I understand.

—I've spoken to Mary, he said to me. She and I agree that it's more important to speak the truth than to make money.

Harrison laughed at that, but cut himself short, remembering the sadness of the occasion.

—My son John was there, he said, looking at Arthur as though he were God Almighty. So what could I say?

They smoked in silence awhile. I asked him, said Harrison, about his partners. After all their job was to sell machinery to the Mines. I've discussed it with my partners, he said to me, and if there's any trouble, I've told them I'll get out. And what would you do? I asked him. What won't I do? he said. His face was sort of excited. Well, what could I say more?

Jarvis did not answer. For this boy of his had gone journeying in strange waters, further than his parents had known. Or perhaps his mother knew. It would not surprise him if his mother knew. But he himself had never done such journeying, and there was nothing he could say.

—Am I tiring you, Jarvis? Or is there perhaps something else you'd like to talk about? Or go to bed, perhaps?

—Harrison, you're doing me more good by talking.

—Well, that's how he was. He and I didn't talk much about these things. It's not my line of country. I try to treat a native decently, but he's not my food and drink. And to tell you the truth, these crimes put me off. I tell you, Jarvis, we're scared stiff at the moment in Johannesburg.

—Of crime?

—Yes, of native crime. There are too many of these murders and robberies and brutal attacks. I tell you we don't go to bed at night without barricading the house. It was at the Phillipsons', three doors down, that a gang of these roughs broke in; they knocked old Phillipson unconscious, and beat up his wife. It was lucky the girls were out at a dance, or one doesn't know what might have happened. I asked Arthur about that, but he reckoned we were to blame somehow. Can't say I always followed him, but he had a kind of sincerity. You sort of felt that if you had the time you could get some sort of sense out of it.

—There's one thing I don't get the sense of, said Jarvis. Why this should have happened. . . .

—You mean . . . to him, of all people?

—Yes.

—That's one of the first things that we said. Here he was, day in and day out, on a kind of mission. And it was he who was killed.

—Mind you, said Jarvis, coming to a point, mind you, it's happened before. I mean, that missionaries were killed.

Harrison made no answer, and they smoked their pipes silently. A missionary, thought Jarvis, and thought how strange it was that he had called his son a missionary. For he had never thought much of missionaries. True, the Church made a lot of it, and there were special appeals to which he had given, but one did that kind of thing without believing much in missionaries. There was a mission near him, at Ndotsheni. But it was a sad place as he remembered it. A dirty old wood-and-iron church, patched and forlorn, and a dirty old parson, in a barren valley where the grass hardly grew. A dirty old school where he had heard them reciting, parrot-fashion, on the one or two occasions that he had ridden past there, reciting things that could mean little to them.

—Bed, Jarvis? Or another drink?

—Bed, I think. Did you say the police were coming?

—They're coming at nine.

—And I'd like to see the house.

—I thought that you would. They'll take you there.

—Good. Then I'll go to bed. Will you say good night to your wife for me?

—I'll do that. You know your room? And breakfast? Eight-thirty?

—Eight-thirty. Good night. And many thanks for your kindnesses.

—No thanks are needed. Nothing is too much trouble. Good night, Jarvis, and I hope you and Margaret will get some sleep.

Jarvis walked up the stairs, and went into the room. He walked in quietly, and closed the door, and did not put on the light. The moon was shining through the windows, and he stood there looking out on the world. All that he had heard went quietly through his mind. His wife turned in the bed, and said, James.

—My dear.

—What were you thinking, my dear?

He was silent, searching for an answer. Of it all, he said.

—I thought you would never come.

He went to her quickly, and she caught at his hands. We were talking of the boy, he said. All that he did, and tried to do. All the people that are grieved.

—Tell me, my dear,

And so he told her in low tones all he had heard. She marvelled a little, for her husband was a quiet silent man, not given to much talking. But tonight he told her all that Harrison had told him.

—It makes me proud, she whispered.

—But you always knew he was like that.

—Yes, I knew.

—I knew too that he was a decent man, he said. But you were always nearer to him than I was.

—It's easier for a mother, James.

—I suppose so. But I wish now that I'd known more of him. You see, the things that he did, I've never had much to do with that sort of thing.

—Nor I either, James. His life was quite different from ours.

—It was a good life by all accounts.

He sat, she lay, in silence, with their thoughts and their memories and their grief.

—Although his life was different, he said, you understood it.

—Yes, James.

—I'm sorry I didn't understand it.

Then he said in a whisper, I didn't know it would ever be so important to understand it.

—My dear, my dear.

Her arms went about him, and she wept. And he continued to whisper, There's one thing I don't understand, why it should have happened to him.

They lay there thinking of it, the pain was deep, deep and ineluctable. She tightened her arms about him.

—James, let's try to sleep, she said.

JARVIS sat in the chair of his sofa, and his wife and Mary left him to return to the Harrisons. Books, books, books, more books than he had ever seen in a house! On the table papers, letters, and more books. Mr. Jarvis, will you speak at the Parkwold Methodist Guild? Mr. Jarvis, will you speak at the Anglican Young People's Association in Sophiatown? Mr. Jarvis, will you speak in a symposium at the University? No, Mr. Jarvis would be unable to speak at any of those.

On the walls between the books there were four pictures, of Christ crucified, and Abraham Lincoln, and the white gabled house of Vergelegen, and a painting of leafless willows by a river in a wintry veld.

He rose from the chair to look at the books. Here were hundreds of books, all about Abraham Lincoln. He had not known that so many books had been written about any one man. One bookcase was full of them. And another was full of books about South Africa, Sarah Gertrude Millin's *Life of Rhodes*, and her book about Smuts, and Engelenburg's *Life of Louis Botha*, and books on South African race problems, and books on South African birds, and the Kruger Park, and innumerable others. Another bookcase was full of Afrikaans books, but the titles conveyed nothing to him. And here were books about religion and Soviet Russia, and crime and criminals, and books of poems. He looked about for Shakespeare, and here was Shakespeare too.

He went back to the chair, and sat there looking long at the pictures of Christ crucified, and Abraham Lincoln, and Vergelegen, and the willows by the river. Then he drew some pieces of paper towards him.

The first was a letter to his son from the secretary of the Claremont African Boys' Club, Gladiolus Street, Claremont, regretting that Mr. Jarvis had not been able to attend the Annual Meeting of the Club, and informing him he had again been elected as President. And the letter concluded, with quaintness of spelling and phrase—

I am compelled by the Annual Meeting to congratulate you with this matter, and to express considerable thanks to you for all the time you have been spending with us, and for the presents you have been giving the Club. How this Club would be arranged without your participation,

would be a mystery to many minds amongst us. It is on these accounts that we desire to elect you again to the President.

I am asking an apology for this writing-paper, but our Club writing-paper is lost owing to unforeseen circumstances.

I am,

Your obedient servant,
WASHINGTON LEFIFI.

The other papers were in his son's handwriting. They were obviously part of some larger whole, for the first line was the latter end of a sentence, and the last line was a sentence unfinished. He looked for the rest of it, but finding nothing, settled down to read what he had:

was permissible. What we did when we came to South Africa was permissible. It was permissible to develop our great resources with the aid of what labour we could find. It was permissible to use unskilled men for unskilled work. But it is not permissible to keep men unskilled for the sake of unskilled work.

It was permissible when we discovered gold to bring labour to the mines. It was permissible to build compounds and to keep women and children away from the towns. It was permissible as an experiment, in the light of what we knew. But in the light of what we know now, with certain exceptions, it is no longer permissible. It is not permissible for us to go on destroying family life when we know that we are destroying it.

It was permissible to leave native education to those who wanted to develop it. It was permissible to doubt its benefits. But it is no longer permissible in the light of what we know. Partly because it made possible industrial development, and partly because it happened in spite of us, there is now a large urbanized native population. Now society has always, for reasons of self-interest if for no other, educated its children so that they grow up law-abiding. There is no other way that it can be done. Yet we continue to leave the education of our native urban society to those few Europeans who feel strongly about it, and to deny opportunities and money for its expansion. That is not permissible. For reasons of self-interest alone, it is dangerous.

It was permissible to allow the destruction of a tribal system that impeded the growth of the country. It was permissible to believe that its destruction was inevitable. But it is not permissible to watch its destruction, and to replace it by nothing, or by so little, that a whole people

deteriorates, physically and morally. Our natives today produce criminals and prostitutes and drunkards, not because it is their nature to do so, but because their simple tribal system of order and tradition and convention has been destroyed. It was destroyed by the impact of our own civilization. Our civilization has therefore an inescapable duty to set up another system of order and tradition and convention.

No one wishes to make the problem seem smaller than it is. No one wishes to make its solution seem easy. No one wishes to make light of the fears that beset us. But whether we be fearful or no, we shall never, because we are a Christian people, be able to evade the moral issues. It is time——

And there the manuscript and the page ended. Jarvis, who had become absorbed in the reading, searched again among the papers on the table, but he could find nothing to show that anything more than this had been written.

He lit his pipe, and pulling the papers towards him, began to read them again.

After he had finished them the second time, he sat smoking his pipe and was lost in thought. Then he got up from his chair and went and stood in front of the Lincoln bookcase, and looked up at the picture of the man who had exercised such an influence over his son. He looked at the hundreds of books, and slid aside the glass panel and took one of them out. Then he returned to his chair, and began to turn over its pages. One of the chapters was headed "The Famous Speech at Gettysburg." He turned over the preliminary pages till he came to the speech, and read it through carefully. That done, he smoked again, lost in a deep abstraction. After some time he rose and replaced the book in the case, and shut the case. Then he opened the case again, and slipped the book into his pocket, and shut the case. He looked at his watch, knocked out his pipe in the fire-place, put on his hat, took up his stick. He walked slowly down the stairs, and opened the door into the fatal passage. He took off his hat and looked down at the dark stain on the floor. Unasked, unwanted, the picture of the small boy came into his mind, the small boy at High Place, the small boy with the wooden guns. Unseeing he walked along the passage and out of the door through which death had come so suddenly. The policeman saluted him, and he answered him

with words that meant nothing, that made no sense at all. He put on his hat, and walked to the gate. Undecided he looked up and down the road. Then with an effort he began to walk. With a sigh the policeman relaxed.

THE SERVICE in the Parkwold Church was over, and the church had been too small for all who wanted to come. White people, black people, coloured people, Indians—it was the first time that Jarvis and his wife had sat in a church with people who were not white. The Bishop himself had spoken, words that pained and uplifted. And the Bishop too had said that men did not understand this riddle, why a young man so full of promise was cut off in his youth, why a woman was widowed and children were orphaned, why a country was bereft of one who might have served it greatly. And the Bishop's voice rose when he spoke of South Africa, and he spoke in a language of beauty, and Jarvis listened for a while without pain, under the spell of the words. And the Bishop said that here had been a life devoted to South Africa, of intelligence and courage, of love that cast out fear, so that the pride welled up in the heart, pride in the stranger who had been his son.

The funeral was over. The brass doors opened soundlessly, and the coffin slid soundlessly into the furnace that would reduce it to ashes. And people that he did not know shook hands with him, some speaking their sympathy in brief conventional phrases, some speaking simply of his son. The black people—yes, the black people also—it was the first time he had ever shaken hands with black people.

They returned to the house of the Harrisons, for the night that is supposed to be worst of all the nights that must come. For Margaret it would no doubt be so; he would not leave her again to go to bed alone. But for him it was over; he could sit quietly in Harrison's study, and drink his whisky and smoke his pipe, and talk about any matter that Harrison wanted to talk about, even about his son.

—How long will you stay, Jarvis? You're welcome to stay as long as you wish.

—Thank you, Harrison. I think Margaret will go back with Mary and the children, and we'll arrange for the son of one of my neighbours to stay with them. A nice lad, just out of the army. But I'll stay to wind up Arthur's affairs, at least in the preliminary stages.

—And what did the police say, if I may ask?

—They're still waiting for Arthur's servant to recover. They have hopes that he recognized one of them. Otherwise they say it will be very difficult. The whole thing was over so quickly. They hope too that someone may have seen them getting away. They think they were frightened and excited, and wouldn't have walked away normally.

—I hope to God they get them. And string 'em all up. Pardon me, Jarvis.

—I know exactly what you mean.

—God knows what's coming to the country, I don't. I'm not a nigger-hater, Jarvis. I try to give 'em a square deal, decent wages, and a clean room, and reasonable time off. Our servants stay with us for years. But the natives as a whole are getting out of hand. They've even started trade unions, did you know that?

—I didn't know that.

—Well, they have. They're threatening to strike here in the mines for ten shillings a day. They get about three shillings a shift now, and some of the mines are on the verge of closing down. They live in decent compounds—some of the latest compounds I wouldn't mind living in myself. They get good balanced food, far better than they'd ever get at home, free medical attention, and God knows what. I tell you, Jarvis, if mining costs go up much more there won't be any mines. And where will South Africa be then? And where would the natives be themselves? They'd die by the thousands of starvation.

—Am I intruding? asked John Harrison, coming into the study.

—Sit down, John, said Harrison.

So the young man sat down, and his father, who was growing warm and excited, proceeded to develop his theme.

—And where would the farmers be, Jarvis? Where would you sell your products, and who could afford to buy them? There wouldn't be any subsidies. There wouldn't be any industry either; industry depends

on the mines to provide the money that will buy its products. And this Government of ours soaks the mines every year for a cool seventy per cent of the profits. And where would they be if there were no mines? Half the Afrikaners in the country would be out of work. There wouldn't be any civil service, either. Half of them would be out of work, too.

He poured out some more whisky for them both, and then resumed his subject.

—I tell you there wouldn't be any South Africa at all if it weren't for the mines. You could shut the place up, and give it back to the natives. That's what makes me so angry when people criticize the mines. Especially the Afrikaners. They have some fool notion that the mining people are foreign to the country, and are sucking the blood out of it, ready to clear out when the goose stops laying the eggs. I'm telling you that most of the mining shares are held here in the country itself, they're *our* mines. I get sick and tired of all this talk. Republic! Where would we be if we ever get a republic?

—Harrison, I'm going to bed. I don't want Margaret to go to bed alone.

—Old man, I'm sorry. I'm afraid I forgot myself.

—There's nothing to be sorry about. It's done me good to listen to you. I could have wished that my son was here tonight, that I could have heard him argue with you.

—You would have enjoyed it, Mr. Jarvis, said John Harrison eagerly, responding to this natural invitation to talk about a man not long since dead. I never heard anyone argue about these things as he could.

—I didn't agree with him, said Harrison, his discomfort passing, but I had a great respect for anything that he said.

—He was a good man, Harrison. I'm not sorry that we had him. Good night to you.

—Good night, Jarvis. Did you sleep last night? Did Margaret sleep?

—We both got some sleep.

—I hope you get some more tonight. Don't forget, the house is at your service.

—Thank you, good night. John?

—Yes, Mr. Jarvis.

—Do you know the boys' club in Gladiolus Road, Claremont?

—I know it well. It was our club. Arthur's and mine.

—I should like to see it. Any time that suits.

—I'd be glad to take you, Mr. Jarvis.

—Thank you. Good night, Harrison. Good night, John.

The next morning Harrison waited for his guest at the foot of the stairs.

—Come into the study, he said. They went in, and Harrison closed the door behind him.

—The police have just telephoned, Jarvis. The servant recovered consciousness this morning. He says there were three right enough. They had their mouths and noses covered, but he is sure that the one that knocked him out was an old garden-boy of Mary's. Mary had to get rid of him for some trouble or other. He recognized him because of some twitching about the eyes. When he left Mary, he got a job at some textile factory in Doornfontein. Then he left the factory, and no one can say where he went. But they got information about some other native who had been very friendly with him. They're after him now, hoping that he can tell them where to find the garden-boy. They certainly seem to be moving.

—They do seem to be.

—And here is a copy of Arthur's manuscript on native crime. Shall I leave it on the table and you can read it in peace after breakfast?

—Thank you, leave it there.

After breakfast, Jarvis returned to his host's study, and began to read his son's manuscript.

He turned first to the last page of it, and read with pain the last unfinished paragraph. This was almost the last thing that his son had done. When this was done he had been alive. Then at this moment, at this very word that hung in the air, he had got up and gone down the stairs to his death. If one could have cried then, Don't go down! If one could have cried, Stop, there is danger! But there was no one to cry. No one knew then what so many knew now. But these thoughts were unprofitable; it was not his habit to dwell on what might have been but what could never be. He wanted to understand his son,

not to desire what was no more accessible to desire. So he compelled himself to read the last paragraph slowly—with his head, not his heart, so that he could understand it.

The truth is that our Christian civilization is riddled through and through with dilemma. We believe in the brotherhood of man, but we do not want it in South Africa. We believe that God endows men with diverse gifts, and that human life depends for its fullness on their employment and enjoyment, but we do not want it in South Africa. We believe in help for the underdog, but we want him to stay under. We go so far as to credit Almighty God with the intention of having created black men to hew wood and draw water for white men. We go so far as to assume that He blesses any action that is designed to prevent black men from the full employment of the gifts He gave them. Alongside of these very arguments we use others totally inconsistent, so that the accusation of repression may be refuted. We say we withhold education because the black child has not the intelligence to profit by it; we withhold opportunity to develop gifts because black people have no gifts; we justify our action by saying that it took us thousands of years to achieve our own advancement, and it would be foolish to suppose that it will take the black man any lesser time, and that therefore there is no need for hurry. We shift our ground again when a black man does achieve something remarkable, and feel deep pity for a man who is condemned to the loneliness of being remarkable, and decide that it is a Christian kindness not to let black men become remarkable. The truth is that our civilization is not Christian; it is a tragic compound of great ideal and fearful practice, of high assurance and desperate anxiety, of loving charity and fearful clutching of possessions. Allow me a minute . . .

Jarvis sat, deeply moved. Whether because this was his son, whether because this was almost the last act of his son, he could not say. Whether because there was some quality in the words, that too he could not say, for he had given little time in his life to the savouring and judging of words. Whether because there was some quality in the ideas, that too he could not say. For he had given little time to the study of these particular matters.

He picked up the page again, but for his son, not for the words or the ideas.

He looked at the words.

Allow me a minute. . . .

And nothing more. Those fingers would not write any more. Allow me a minute, I hear a sound in the kitchen. Allow me a minute, while I go to my death. Allow me a thousand minutes, I am not coming back any more.

Jarvis shook it off, and put another match to his pipe, and after he had read the paper through, sat in a reverie, smoking.

—James.

He started. Yes, my dear, he said.

—You shouldn't sit by yourself, she said.

He smiled at her. It's not my nature to brood, he said.

—Then what have you been doing?

—Thinking. Not brooding, thinking. And reading. This is what I have been reading.

She took it, looked at it, and held it against her breast.

—Read it, he said quietly, it's worth reading.

So she sat down to read it, and he, watching her, knew what she would do. She turned to the last page, to the last words, Allow me a minute, and sat looking at them. She looked at him, she was going to speak, he accepted that. Pain does not go away so quickly.

THEY CALL for silence in the Court, and the people stand. The Judge enters with his two assessors, and they sit, and then the people sit also. The Court is begun.

From the place of detention under the ground come the three that are to be judged, and all the people look at them. Some people think that they look like murderers, they even whisper it, though it is forbidden to whisper. Some people think they do not look like murderers, and some think this one looks like a murderer, but that one does not.

A white man stands up and says that these three are accused of the murder of Arthur Trevelyan Jarvis, in his house at Plantation Road, Parkwold, Johannesburg, on Tuesday the eighth day of October, 1946, in the early afternoon. The first is Absalom Kumalo, the second is Matthew Kumalo, the third is Johannes Pafuri. They are called upon to



plead guilty or not guilty, and the first says, I plead guilty to killing, but I did not mean to kill. The second says, I am not guilty, and the third likewise. Everything is said in English and in Zulu, so that these three may understand. For though Pafuri is not a Zulu, he understands it well, he says.

The lawyer, the white man who is taking the case for God, says that Absalom Kumalo will plead guilty to culpable homicide, but not to murder, for he had no intention to kill. But the prosecutor says there is no charge of culpable homicide; for it is murder, and nothing less than murder, with which he is charged. So Absalom Kumalo pleads, like the two others, not guilty.

Then the prosecutor speaks for a long time, and tells the Court the whole story of the crime. And Absalom Kumalo is still and silent, but the other two look grieved and shocked to think such things are said.

—Then after this plan was made you decided on this day, the eighth day of October?

—That is so.

—Why did you choose this day?

—Because Johannes said that no one would be in the house.

—This same Johannes Pafuri?

—This same Johannes Pafuri who is charged with me now.

—And you chose this time of half past one?

—That is so.

—Was it not a bad time to choose? White people come home to eat at this time.

But the accused makes no answer.

—Why did you choose this time?

—It was Johannes who chose this time. He said it was told to him by a voice.

—What voice?

—No, that I do not know.

—An evil voice?

And again there is no answer.

—Then you three went to the back door of the house?

—That is so.

—You and these two who are charged with you?

—I and these very two.

—And then?

—Then we tied the handkerchiefs over our mouths.

—And then?

—Then we went into the kitchen.

—Who was there?

—The servant of the house was there.

—Richard Mpiring?

—No, I do not know his name.

—Is this the man here?

—Yes, that is the man.

—And then? Tell the Court what happened.

—This man was afraid. He saw my revolver. He stood back against the sink where he was working. He said, What do you want? Johannes said, We want money and clothes. This man said, You cannot do such a thing. Johannes said, Do you want to die? This man was afraid and did not speak. Johannes said, When I speak, people must tremble. Then he said again, Do you want to die? The man said nothing, but he suddenly called out, Master, master. Then Johannes struck him over the head with the iron bar that he had behind his back.

—How many times did he strike him?

—Once.

—Did he call out again?

—He made no sound.

—What did you do?

—No, we were silent. Johannes said we must be silent.

—What did you do? Did you listen?

—We listened.

—Did you hear anything?

—We heard nothing.

—Where was your revolver?

—In my hand.

—And then?

—Then a white man came into the passage.

—And then?

—I was frightened. I fired the revolver.

—And then?

The accused looked down at the floor. The white man fell, he said.

—And then?

—Johannes said quickly, We must go. So we all went quickly.

—To the back gate?

—Yes.

—And then over the road into the plantation?

—Yes.

—Did you stay together?

—No, I went alone.

—And when did you see these two again?

—At the house of Baby Mkize.

But the Judge interrupts. You may proceed shortly, Mr. Prosecutor.
But I have one or two questions to ask the first accused.

—As your lordship pleases.

—Why did you carry this revolver? the Judge asked.

—It was to frighten the servant of the house.

—But why do you carry any revolver?

The boy is silent.

—You must answer my question.

—They told me to carry it.

—Who told you?

—No, they told me Johannesburg was dangerous.

—Who told you?

The boy is silent.

—You mean you were told by the kind of man who is engaged in this business of breaking in and stealing?

—No, I do not mean that.

—Well, who told you?

—I do not remember. It was said in some place where I was.

—You mean you were all sitting there, and some man said, One needs a revolver in Johannesburg, it is dangerous?

—Yes, I mean that.

—And you knew this revolver was loaded?

—Yes, I knew it.

—If this revolver is to frighten people, why must it be loaded?

But the boy does not answer.

—You were therefore ready to shoot with it?

—No, I would not have shot a decent person. I would have shot only if someone had shot at me.

—Would you have shot at a policeman if he had shot at you in the execution of his duty?

—No, not at a policeman.

The Judge pauses and everything is silent. Then he says gravely, And this white man you shot, was he not a decent person?

The accused looks down again at the floor. Then he answers in a low voice, I was afraid, I was afraid. I never meant to shoot him.

—Where did you get this revolver?

—I bought it from a man.

—Where?

—In Alexandra.

—Who is this man? What is his name?

—I do not know his name.

—Where does he live?

—I do not know where he lives.

—Could you find him?

—I could try to find him.

—Was this revolver loaded when you bought it?

—It had two bullets in it.

—How many bullets were in it when you went to this house?

—There was one bullet in it.

—What happened to the other?

—I took the revolver into one of the plantations in the hills beyond Alexandra, and I fired it there.

—What did you fire at?

—I fired at a tree.

—Did you hit this tree?

—Yes, I hit it.

—Then you thought, Now I can fire this revolver?

—Yes, that is so.

—Who carried the iron bar?

—Johannes carried it.

—Did you know he carried it?

—I knew it.

—You knew it was a dangerous weapon? That it could kill a man?

The boy's voice rises. It was not meant for killing or striking, he said. It was meant only for frightening.

—But you had a revolver for frightening?

—Yes, but Johannes took the bar. It had been blessed, he said.

—What did Johannes mean when he said the bar had been blessed?

—I do not know.

—Did he mean by a priest?

—I do not know.

—You did not ask?

—No, I did not ask.

—Your father is a priest?

The boy looks down at the floor and in a low voice he answers, Yes.

—Would he bless such a bar?

—No.

—You did not say to Johannes, You must not take this bar?

—No.

—You did not say to him, How can such a thing be blessed?

—No.

—Proceed, Mr. Prosecutor.

—And if these two say there was no murder discussed at the house of Baby Mkize, they are lying?

—They are lying.

—And if they say that you made up this story after meeting them at the house of Mkize, they are lying?

—They are lying.

—And if Baby Mkize says that no murder was discussed in her presence, she is lying?

—She is lying. She was afraid, and said we must leave her house and never return to it.

—Did you leave together?

—No, I left first.

—And where did you go?

—I went into a plantation.

—And what did you do there?

—I buried the revolver.

—Is this the revolver before the Court?

The revolver is handed up to the accused and he examines it. This is the revolver, he says.

—How was it found?

—No, I told the police where to find it.

—And what did you do next?

—I prayed there.

The Prosecutor seems taken aback for a moment, but the Judge says, And what did you pray there?

—I prayed for forgiveness.

—And what else did you pray?

—No, there was nothing else that I wished to pray.

—And on the second day you walked again to Johannesburg?

—Yes.

—And you again walked among the people who were boycotting the buses?

—Yes.

—Were they still talking about the murder?

—They were still talking. Some said they heard it would soon be discovered.

—And then?

—I was afraid.

—So what did you do?

—That night I went to Germiston.

—But what did you do that day? Did you hide again?

—No, I bought a shirt, and then I walked about with the parcel.

—Why did you do that?

—I thought they would think I was a messenger.

—Was there anything else that you did?

—There was nothing else.

—Then you went to Germiston? To what place?

—To the house of Joseph Bhengu, at 12 Maseru Street.

—And then?

—While I was there the police came.

—What happened?

—They asked me if I was Absalom Kumalo. And I agreed, and I was afraid, and I had meant to go that day to confess to the police, and now I could see I had delayed foolishly.

—Did they arrest you?

—No, they asked if I could tell them where to find Johannes, I said no, I did not know, but it was not Johannes who had killed the white man, it was I myself. But it was Johannes who had struck down the servant of the house. And I told them that Matthew was there also. And I told them I would show them where I had hidden the revolver. And I told them that I had meant that day to confess, but had delayed foolishly, because I was afraid.

—You then made a statement before Andries Coetzee, Esquire, Additional Magistrate at Johannesburg?

—I do not know his name.

—Is this the statement?

The statement is handed up to the boy. He looks at it and says, Yes, that is the statement.

—And every word is true?

—Every word is true.

—There is no lie in it?

—There is no lie in it, for I said to myself, I shall not lie any more, all the rest of my days, nor do anything more that is evil.

—In fact, you repented?

—Yes, I repented.

—Because you were in trouble?

—Yes, because I was in trouble.

—Did you have any other reason for repenting?

—No, I had no other reason.

The people stand when the Court is adjourned, and while the Judge and his assessors leave the Court. Then they pass out through the doors at the back of the tiers of seats, the Europeans through their door, and the non-Europeans through their door, according to the custom.

Kumalo and Msimangu, Gertrude and Mrs. Lithebe, come out together, and they hear people saying, There is the father of the white man who was killed. And Kumalo looks and sees that it is true, there is the father of the man who was murdered, the man who has the farm on the tops above Ndotsheni, the man he has seen riding past the church. And Kumalo trembles, and does not look at him any more. For how does one look at such a man?

Jarvis thought he would go to the house again. It was foolish to go through the kitchen, past the stain on the floor, up the stairs that led to the bedroom. But that was the way he went. He went not to the bedroom but to the study that was so full of books. He looked at the pictures of the Christ crucified, and Abraham Lincoln, and Vergelegen, and the willows in the winter. He sat down at the table, where lay the invitations to do this and that, and the paper on what was permissible and what was not permissible in South Africa.

He opened the drawers of his son's table, and here were accounts, and here were papers and envelopes, and here were pens and pencils, and here were old cheques stamped and returned by the bank. And here in a deep drawer were typewritten articles, each neatly pinned together, and placed one on top of the other. Here was an article on "The Need for Social Centres" and one on "Birds of a Parkwold Garden," and another on "India and South Africa." And here was one called "Private Essay on the Evolution of a South African," and this he took out to read:

It is hard to be born a South African. One can be born an Afrikaner, or an English-speaking South African, or a coloured man, or a Zulu. One can ride, as I rode when I was a boy, over green hills and into great valleys. One can see, as I saw when I was a boy, the reserves of the Bantu people and see nothing of what was happening there at all. One can hear, as I heard when I was a boy, that there are more Afrikaners than English-speaking people in South Africa, and yet know nothing, see nothing, of them at all.

I was born on a farm, brought up by honourable parents, given all that a child could need or desire. They were upright and kind and law-abiding; they taught me my prayers and took me regularly to church; they had no trouble with servants and my father was never short of labour. From them I learned all that a child should learn of honour and charity and generosity. But of South Africa I learned nothing at all.

Shocked and hurt, Jarvis put down the papers. For a moment he felt something almost like anger, but he wiped his eyes with his fingers and shook it from him. But he was trembling and could read no further. He stood up and put on his hat, and went down the stairs, and as far as the stain on the floor. The policeman was ready to salute him, but he turned again, and went up the stairs, and sat down again at the table. He took up the papers and read them through to the end. Perhaps he was some judge of words after all, for the closing paragraphs moved him. Perhaps he was some judge of ideas after all.

Therefore I shall devote myself, my time, my energy, my talents, to the service of South Africa. I shall no longer ask myself if this or that is expedient, but only if it is right. I shall do this, not because I am noble or unselfish, but because life slips away, and because I need for the rest of my journey a star that will not play false to me, a compass that will not

lie. I shall do this, not because I am a Negrophile and a hater of my own, but because I cannot find it in me to do anything else. I am lost when I balance this against that, I am lost when I ask if this is safe, I am lost when I ask if men, white men or black men, Englishmen or Afrikaners, Gentiles or Jews, will approve. Therefore I shall try to do what is right, and to speak what is true. It would not be honest to pretend that it is solely an inverted selfishness that moves me. I am moved by something that is not my own, that moves me to do what is right, at whatever cost it may be. In this I am fortunate that I have married a wife who thinks as I do, who has tried to conquer her own fears and hates. Aspiration is thus made easy. My children are too young to understand. It would be grievous if they grew up to hate me or fear me, or to think of me as a betrayer of those things that I call our possessions. It would be a source of unending joy if they grew up to think as we do. It would be exciting, exhilarating, a matter for thanksgiving. But it cannot be bargained for. It must be given or withheld, and whether the one or the other, it must not alter the course that is right.

Jarvis sat a long time smoking, he did not read any more. He put the papers back in the drawer and closed it. He sat there till his pipe was finished. When it was done he put on his hat and came down the stairs. At the foot of the stairs he turned and walked towards the front door. He was not afraid of the passage and the stain on the floor; he was not going that way any more, that was all.

The front door was self-locking and he let himself out. He looked up at the sky from the farmer's habit, but these skies of a strange country told him nothing. He walked down the path and out of the gate. The policeman at the back door heard the door lock, and shook his head with understanding. He cannot face it any more, he said to himself, the old chap cannot face it any more.

ONE OF THE favourite nieces of Margaret Jarvis, Barbara Smith by name, had married a man from Springs, and both Jarvis and his wife, on a day when the Court was not holding the case, went to spend a day with them. He had thought it would be a good thing for his wife, who had taken the death of their son even more hardly than he had feared. The two women talked of the people of Ixopo and Lufafa and

Highflats and Umzimkulu, and he left them and walked in the garden, for he was a man of the soil. After a while they called to him to say they were going into the town, and asked if he wished to go with them. But he said that he would stay at the house, and read the newspaper while they were away, and this he did.

While he was reading there was a knock at the kitchen door, and he went out to find a native parson standing on the paved stone at the foot of the three stone steps that led up to the kitchen. The parson was old, and his black clothes were green with age, and his collar was brown with age or dirt. He took off his hat, showing the whiteness of his head, and he looked startled and afraid and he was trembling.

Good morning, umfundisi, said Jarvis in Zulu, of which he was a master.

The parson answered in a trembling voice, Umnumzana, which means sir, and to Jarvis's surprise, he sat down on the lowest step, as though he were ill or starving. Jarvis knew this was not rudeness, for the old man was humble and well-mannered, so he came down the steps, saying, Are you ill, umfundisi? But the old man did not answer. He continued to tremble, and he looked down on the ground, so that Jarvis could not see his face, and could not have seen it unless he had lifted the chin with his hand, which he did not do, for such a thing is not lightly done.

—Are you ill, umfundisi?

—I shall recover, umnumzana.

—Do you wish water? Or is it food? Are you hungry?

—No, umnumzana, I shall recover.

Jarvis stood on the paved stone below the lowest step, but the old man was not quick to recover. He continued to tremble, and to look at the ground. It is not easy for a white man to be kept waiting, but Jarvis waited, for the old man was obviously ill and weak. The old man made an effort to rise, using his stick, but the stick slipped on the paved stone, and fell clattering on the stone. Jarvis picked it up and restored it to him, but the old man put it down as a hindrance, and he put down his hat also, and tried to lift himself up by pressing his hands on the steps. But his first effort failed, and he sat down again, and continued to tremble. Jarvis would have helped him, but such a thing is not so lightly

done as picking up a stick; then the old man pressed his hands again on the steps, and lifted himself up. Then he lifted his face also and looked at Jarvis, and Jarvis saw that his face was full of a suffering that was of neither illness nor hunger. And Jarvis stooped, and picked up the hat and stick, and he held the hat carefully for it was old and dirty, and he restored them to the parson.

—I thank you, umnumzana.

—Are you sure you are not ill, umfundisi?

—I am recovered, umnumzana.

—And what are you seeking, umfundisi?

The old parson put his hat and his stick down again on the step, and with trembling hands pulled out a wallet from the inside pocket of the old green coat, and the papers fell out on the ground, because his hands would not be still.

—I am sorry, umnumzana.

He stooped to pick up the papers, and because he was old he had to kneel, and the papers were old and dirty, and some that he had picked up fell out of his hands while he was picking up others, and the wallet fell too, and the hands were trembling and shaking. Jarvis was torn between compassion and irritation, and he stood and watched uncomfortably.

—I am sorry to detain you, umnumzana.

—It is no matter, umfundisi.

At last the papers were collected, and all were restored to the wallet except one, and this one he held out to Jarvis, and on it were the name and address of this place where they were.

—This is the place, umfundisi.

—I was asked to come here, umnumzana. There is a man named Sibeko of Ndotsheni—

—Ndotsheni, I know it. I come from Ndotsheni. *

—And this man had a daughter, umnumzana, who worked for a white man uSmith in Ixopo

—Yes, yes.

—And when the daughter of uSmith married, she married the white man whose name is on the paper.

—That is so.

—And they came to live here in Springs, and the daughter of Sibeko came here also to work for them. Now Sibeko has not heard of her for these twelve months, and I am asked to inquire about her.

Jarvis turned and went into the house, and returned with the boy who was working there. You may inquire from him, he said, and he turned again and went into the house. But when he was there it came suddenly to him that this was the old parson of Ndotsheni himself. So he came out again.

—Did you find what you wanted, umfundisi?

—This boy does not know her, umnumzana. When he came she had gone already.

—The mistress of the house is out, the daughter of uSmith. But she will soon be returning, and you may wait for her if you wish.

Jarvis dismissed the boy, and waited till he was gone.

—I know you, umfundisi, he said.

The suffering in the old man's face smote him, so that he said, Sit down, umfundisi. Then the old man would be able to look at the ground, and he would not need to look at Jarvis, and Jarvis would not need to look at him, for it was uncomfortable to look at him. So the old man sat down and Jarvis said to him, not looking at him, There is something between you and me, but I do not know what it is.

—Umnumzana.

—You are in fear of me, but I do not know what it is. You need not be in fear of me.

—It is true, umnumzana. You do not know what it is.

—I do not know but I desire to know.

—I doubt if I could tell it, umnumzana.

—You must tell it, umfundisi. Is it heavy?

—It is very heavy, umnumzana. It is the heaviest thing of all my years.

He lifted his face, and there was in it suffering that Jarvis had not seen before. Tell me, he said, it will lighten you.

—I am afraid, umnumzana.

—I see you are afraid, umfundisi. It is that which I do not understand.

But I tell you, you need not be afraid. I shall not be angry. There will be no anger in me against you.

—Then, said the old man, this thing that is the heaviest thing of all my years, is the heaviest thing of all your years also.

Jarvis looked at him, at first bewildered, but then something came to him. You can only mean one thing, he said, you can only mean one thing. But I still do not understand.

—It was my son that killed your son, said the old man.

So they were silent. Jarvis left him and walked out into the trees of the garden. He stood at the wall and looked out over the veld, out to the great white dumps of the mines, like hills under the sun. When he turned to come back, he saw that the old man had risen, his hat in one hand, his stick in the other, his head bowed, his eyes on the ground. He went back to him.

—I have heard you, he said. I understand what I did not understand. There is no anger in me.

—Umnumzana.

—The mistress of the house is back, the daughter of uSmith. Do you wish to see her? Are you recovered?

—It was that that I came to do, umnumzana.

—I understand. And you were shocked when you saw me. You had no thought that I would be here. How did you know me?

—I have seen you riding past Ndotsheni, past the church where I work.

Jarvis listened to the sounds in the house. Then he spoke very quietly. Perhaps you saw the boy also, he said. He too used to ride past Ndotsheni. On a red horse with a white face. And he carried wooden guns, here in his belt, as small boys do.

The old man's face was working. He continued to look on the ground, and Jarvis could see that tears fell on it. He himself was moved and unmanned, and he would have brought the thing to an end, but he could find no quick voice for it.

—I remember, umnumzana. There was a brightness in him.

—Yes, yes, said Jarvis, there was a brightness in him.

—Umnumzana, it is a hard word to say. But my heart holds a deep

sorrow for you, and for the inkosikazi, and for the young inkosikazi, and for the children.

—Yes, yes, said Jarvis. Yes, yes, he said fiercely. I shall call the mistress of the house.

He went in and brought her out with him. This old man, he said in English, has come to inquire about the daughter of a native named Sibeko, who used to work for you in Ixopo. They have heard nothing of her for months.

—I had to send her away, said Smith's daughter. She was good when she started, and I promised her father to look after her. But she went to the bad and started to brew liquor in her room. She was arrested and sent to jail for a month, and after that of course I could not take her back again.

—You do not know where she is? asked Jarvis.

—I'm sure I do not know, said Smith's daughter in English. And I do not care.

—She does not know, said Jarvis in Zulu. But he did not add that Smith's daughter did not care.

—I thank you, said the old man in Zulu. Stay well, umnumzana. And he bowed to Smith's daughter and she nodded her acknowledgement.

He put on his hat and started to walk down the path to the back gate, according to the custom. Smith's daughter went into the house, and Jarvis followed the old man slowly, as though he were not following him. The old man opened the gate and went out through it and closed it behind him. As he turned to close it he saw that Jarvis had followed him, and he bowed to him.

—Go well, umfundisi, said Jarvis.

—Stay well, umnumzana.

The old man raised his hat and put it back again on his head. Then he started to walk slowly down the road to the station, Jarvis watching him until he was out of sight. As he turned to come back, he saw that his wife was coming to join him, and he saw with a pang that she too walked as if she were old.

He walked to join her, and she put her arm in his.

—Why are you so disturbed, James? she asked. Why were you so disturbed when you came into the house?

—Something that came out of the past, he said. You know how it comes suddenly?

She was satisfied, and said, I know.

She held his arm more closely. Barbara wants us for lunch, she said.

THE PEOPLE stand when the great Judge comes into the Court, they stand more solemnly today, for this is the day of the judgment. The Judge sits, and then his two assessors, and then the people; and the three accused are brought from the place under the Court.

—I have given long thought and consideration to this case, says the Judge, and so have my assessors. We have listened carefully to all the evidence that has been brought forward, and have discussed it and tested it piece by piece.

And the interpreter interprets into Zulu what the Judge has said:

—The accused Absalom Kumalo has not sought to deny his guilt. He has told straightforwardly and simply the story of how he shot the late Arthur Jarvis in his house at Parkwold. He has maintained further that it was not his intention to kill or even to shoot, that the weapon was brought to intimidate the servant Richard Mpiring, that he supposed the murdered man to have been elsewhere. With this evidence we must later deal, but part of it is of the gravest importance in determining the guilt of the second and third accused. The first accused, Absalom Kumalo, states that the plan was put forward by the third accused Johannes Pafuri, and that Pafuri struck the blow that rendered unconscious the servant Mpiring. In this he is supported by Mpiring himself, who says that he recognized Pafuri by the twitching of the eyes above the mask. It is further true that he picked out Pafuri from among ten men similarly disguised, more than one of whom suffered from a tic similar to that suffered by Pafuri. But the defence has pointed out that these tics were similar and not identical, and that Pafuri was well-known to Mpiring. The defence has argued that the identification would have been valid only if all ten men had been of a similar build and suffered

from identical tics. The partial validity of the argument is clear; a marked characteristic like a tic can lead as easily to wrong identification as to correct identification, especially when the lower half of the face is concealed. It must be accepted that identification depends on the recognition of a pattern, of a whole, and that it becomes uncertain when the pattern is partially concealed. It would appear therefore that Mpiring's identification of his assailant is not of itself sufficient proof that Pafuri was that man.

—The prosecution has made much of the previous association of the three accused, and indeed has made out so strong a case that further investigation is called for into the nature of that association. But previous association, even of a criminal nature, is not in itself a proof of association in the grave crime of which these three persons stand accused.

—After long and thoughtful consideration, my assessors and I have come to conclusion that the guilt of the second and third accused is not established, and they will be accordingly discharged. But I have no doubt that their previous criminal association will be exhaustively investigated.

There is a sigh in the Court. One act of this drama is over. The accused Absalom Kumalo makes no sign. He does not even look at the two who are now free. But Pafuri looks about as though he would say, This is right, this is just, what has been done.

—There remains the case against the first accused, the Judge continues. His learned Counsel pleads that he should not suffer the extreme penalty, argues that he is shocked and overwhelmed and stricken by his act, commends him for his truthful and straightforward confession, draws attention to his youth and to the disastrous effect of a great and wicked city on the character of a simple tribal boy. He has dealt profoundly with the disaster that has overwhelmed our native tribal society, and has argued cogently the case of our own complicity in this disaster. But even if it be true that we have, out of fear and selfishness and thoughtlessness, wrought a destruction that we have done little to repair, even if it be true that we should be ashamed of it and do something more courageous and forthright than we are doing, there is nevertheless a law, and it is one of the most monumental achievements of this

defective society that it has made a law, and has set judges to administer it, and has freed those judges from any obligation whatsoever but to administer the law. A judge cannot, must not, dare not allow the existing defects of society to influence him to do anything but administer the law.

—The most important point to consider here is the accused's repeated assertion that he had no intention to kill, that the coming of the white man was unexpected, and that he fired the revolver out of panic and fear. If the Court could accept this as truth, then the Court must find that the accused did not commit murder.

—What are the facts of the case? How can one suppose otherwise than that here were three murderous and dangerous young men? It is true that they did not go to the house with the express intention of killing a man. But it is true that they took with them weapons the use of which might well result in the death of any man who interfered with the carrying out of their unlawful purpose.

—Are we to suppose that in this small room, where in this short and tragic space of time an innocent black man is cruelly struck down and an innocent white man is shot dead, that there was no intention to inflict grievous bodily harm of this kind should the terrible need for it arise? I cannot bring myself to entertain such a supposition.

They are silent in the Court. And the Judge too is silent. There is no sound there. No one coughs or moves or sighs. The Judge speaks:

—This Court finds you guilty, Absalom Kumalo, of the murder of Arthur Trevelyan Jarvis at his residence in Parkwold, on the afternoon of the eighth day of October, 1946. And this Court finds you, Matthew Kumalo, and Johannes Pafuri, not guilty, and you are accordingly discharged.

So these two go down the stairs into the place that is under the ground, and leave the other alone. He looks at them going, perhaps he is thinking, Now it is I alone.

The Judge speaks again. On what grounds, he asks, can this Court make any recommendation to mercy? I have given this long and serious

thought, and I cannot find any extenuating circumstances. Therefore I can make no recommendation to mercy.

They are silent in the Court, but for all that a white man calls out in a loud voice for silence. Kumalo puts his face in his hands, he has heard what it means. Jarvis sits stern and erect. The young white man looks before him and frowns fiercely. The girl sits like the child she is, her eyes are fixed on the Judge, not on her lover.

—I sentence you, Absalom Kumalo, to be returned to custody, and to be hanged by the neck until you are dead. And may the Lord have mercy upon your soul.

The judge rises, and the people rise. But not all is silent. The guilty one falls to the floor, crying and sobbing. And there is a woman wailing, and an old man crying, *Tixo, Tixo*. No one calls for silence, though the Judge is not quite gone. For who can stop the heart from breaking?

THEY PASSED again through the great gate in the grim high wall, Father Vincent and Kumalo, Gertrude and the girl and Msimangu. The boy was brought to them, and for a moment some great hope showed in his eyes, and he stood there trembling and shaking. But Kumalo said to him gently, We are come for the marriage, and the hope died out.

—My son, here is your wife that is to be.

The boy and the girl greeted each other like strangers, each giving hands without life, not to be shaken, but to be held loosely, so that the hands fell apart easily. They did not kiss after the European fashion, but stood looking at each other without words, bound in a great constraint. But at last she asked, Are you in health? and he answered, I am greatly. And he asked, Are you in health? and she answered, I am greatly also. But beyond that there was nothing spoken between them.

Father Vincent left them, and they all stood in the same constraint. Msimangu saw that Gertrude would soon break out into wailing and moaning, and he turned his back on the others and said to her gravely

and privately, Heavy things have happened, but this is a marriage, and it were better to go at once than to wail or moan in this place. When she did not answer he said sternly and coldly, Do you understand me? And she said resentfully, I understand you.

He left her and went to a window in the great grim wall, and she stood sullenly silent.

And Kumalo said desperately to his son, Are you in health? And the boy answered, I am greatly. Are you in health, my father? So Kumalo said, I am greatly. He longed for other things to say, but he could not find them. And indeed it was a mercy for them all, when a white man came to take them to the prison chapel.

Father Vincent was waiting there in his vestments, and he read to them from his book. Then he asked the boy if he took this woman, and he asked the girl if she took this man. And when they had answered as it is laid down in that book, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death did them part, he married them. Then he preached a few words to them, that they were to remain faithful, and to bring up what children there might be in the fear of God. So were they married and signed their names in the book.

After it was done, the two priests and the wife left father and son, and Kumalo said to him, I am glad you are married.

—I also am glad, my father.

—I shall care for your child, my son, even as if it were my own.

But when he realized what it was he had said, his mouth quivered and he would indeed have done that which he was determined not to do, had not the boy said out of his own suffering, When does my father return to Ndotsheni?

—Tomorrow, my son.

—And you will tell my mother that I remember her.

Yes, indeed I shall tell her. Yes, indeed, I shall take her that message. Why, yes indeed. But he did not speak those words, he only nodded his head.

—And, my father.

—Yes, my son.

—I have money in a Post Office Book. Nearly four pounds is there.

It is for the child. They will give it to my father at the office. I have arranged for it.

—Yes, indeed I shall get it. Yes, indeed, even as you have arranged. Why, yes indeed.

—And, my father.

—Yes, my son.

—If the child is a son, I should like his name to be Peter.

And Kumalo said in a strangled voice, Peter.

—Yes, I should like it to be Peter.

—And if it is a daughter.

—No, if it is a daughter, I have not thought of any name. And, my father.

—Yes, my son.

—I have a parcel at Germiston, at the home of Joseph Bhengu, at Number 12, Maseru Street. I should be glad if it could be sold for my son.

—Yes, I hear you.

—There are other things that Pafuri had. But I think he will deny that they are mine.

—Pafuri? This same Pafuri?

—Yes, my father.

—It is better to forget them.

—It is as my father sees.

—And these things at Germiston, my son. I do not know how I could get them, for we leave tomorrow.

—Then it does not matter.

And because Kumalo could see that it did matter, he said, I shall speak to the Reverend Msimangu.

—That would be better.

—And this Pafuri, said Kumalo bitterly. And your cousin. I find it hard to forgive them.

The boy shrugged his shoulders hopelessly.

—They lied, my father. They were there, even as I said.

—Indeed they were there. But they are not here now.

—They are here, my father. There is another case against them.

—I did not mean that, my son. I mean they are not . . . they are not

But he could not bring himself to say what he meant.

—They are here, said the boy not understanding. Here in this very place. Indeed, my father, it is I who go.

—Go?

—Yes. I must go . . . to

Kumalo whispered, To Pretoria?

At those dread words the boy fell on the floor; he was crouched in the way that some of the Indians pray, and he began to sob, with great tearing sounds that convulsed him. For a boy is afraid of death. The old man, moved to it by that deep compassion which was there within him, knelt by his son, and ran his hand over his head.

And the boy was moved by his father's compassion to more terrible sobbing.

—Be of courage, my son.

—I am afraid, he cried. I am afraid.

—Be of courage, my son.

The boy reared up on his haunches. He hid nothing, his face was distorted by his cries. Au! au! I am afraid of the hanging, he sobbed, I am afraid of the hanging.

Still kneeling, the father took his son's hands, and they were not lifeless any more, but clung to his, seeking more comfort, some assurance. And the old man held them more strongly, and said again, Be of good courage, my son.

The white warder, hearing these cries, came in



and said, but not with unkindness, Old man, you must go now.

—I am going, sir. I am going, sir. But give us a little time longer.

So the warder said, Well, only a little time longer, and he withdrew.

—My son, dry your tears.

So the boy took the cloth that was offered him and dried his tears. He kneeled on his knees, and though the sobbing was ended, the eyes were far-seeing and troubled.

—My son, I must go now. Stay well, my son. I shall care for your wife and your child.

—It is good, he says. Yes, he says it is good, but his thoughts are not on any wife or child. Where his thoughts are there is no wife or child, where his eyes are there is no marriage.

—My son, I must go now.

He stood up, but the boy caught his father by the knees, and cried out to him, You must not leave me, you must not leave me. He broke out again into the terrible sobbing, and cried, No, no, you must not leave me.

The white warder came in again and said sternly, Old man, you must go now. And Kumalo would have gone, but the boy held him by the knees, crying out and sobbing. The warder tried to pull his arms away, but he could not, and he called another man to help him. Together they pulled the boy away, and Kumalo said desperately to him, Stay well, my son, but the boy did not hear him.

And so they parted.

Heavy with grief Kumalo left him, and went out to the gate in the wall where the others were waiting. And the girl came to him, and said shyly, but with a smile, Umfundisi.

—Yes, my child.

—I am now your daughter.

He forced himself to smile at her. It is true, he said. And she was eager to talk of it, but when she looked at him she could see that his thoughts were not of such matters. So she did not speak of it further.

—I cannot thank you enough, said Jarvis.

—We would have done more if we could, Jarvis.

John Harrison drove up, and Jarvis and Harrison stood for a moment outside the car.

—Our love to Margaret, and to Mary and the children, Jarvis. We'll come down and see you one of these days.

—You'll be welcome, Harrison, very welcome.

—One thing I wanted to say, Jarvis, said Harrison, dropping his voice. About the sentence. It can't bring the dead back, but it was right, absolutely right. It couldn't have been any other way so far as I'm concerned. If it had been any other way, I'd have felt there was no justice in the world. I'm only sorry the other two got off. The Crown made a mess of the case.

—Yes, I felt that way too. Well, good-bye to you, and thank you again.

—I'm glad to do it.

At the station Jarvis gave John Harrison an envelope.

—Open it when I'm gone, he said.

So when the train had gone, young Harrison opened it. For your club, it said. Do all the things you and Arthur wanted to do. If you like to call it the ARTHUR JARVIS CLUB, I'll be pleased. But that is not a condition.

Young Harrison turned it over to look at the cheque underneath. He looked at the train as though he might have run after it. One thousand pounds, he said. Helen of Troy, one thousand pounds!

They had a party at Mrs. Lithebe's at which Msimangu was the host. It was not a gay party, that was hardly to be thought of. But the food was plentiful, and there was some sad pleasure in it. Msimangu presided after the European fashion, and made a speech commending the virtues of his brother priest, and the motherly care that Mrs. Lithebe had given to all under her roof. Kumalo made a speech too, but it was stumbling and uncertain. But he thanked Msimangu and Mrs. Lithebe for all their kindnesses. Mrs. Lithebe would not speak, but giggled like a girl, and said that people were born to do such kindness. Then Msimangu told them that he had news for them, news that had been private until now, and that this was the first place where it would be told. He was retiring into a community, and would forswear the world and all possessions,

and this was the first time that a black man had done such a thing in South Africa. There was clapping of hands, and all gave thanks for it. And Gertrude sat listening with enjoyment to the speeches at this great dinner, her small son asleep against her breast. And the girl listened also, with eager and smiling face, for in all her years she had never seen anything the like of this.

Then Msimangu said, We must all rise early to catch the train, my friends, and it is time we went to our beds.

Kumalo went with his friend to the gate, and Msimangu said, I am forsaking the world and all possessions, but I have saved a little money. I have no father or mother to depend on me, and I have the permission of the Church to give this to you, my friend, to help you with all the money you have spent in Johannesburg, and all the new duties you have taken up. This book is in your name.

He put the book into Kumalo's hand, and Kumalo knew by the feeling of it that it was a Post Office Book. And Kumalo put his hands with the book on the top of the gate, and he put his head on his hands, and he wept bitterly. And Msimangu said to him, Do not spoil my pleasure, for I have never had a pleasure like this one. Which words of his made the old man break from weeping into sobbing, so that Msimangu said, There is a man coming, be silent, my brother.

They were silent till the man passed, and then Kumalo said, In all my days I have known no one as you are. And Msimangu said sharply, I am a weak and sinful man, but God put His hands on me, that is all. And as for the boy, he said, it is the Governor-General-in-Council who must decide if there will be mercy. As soon as Father Vincent hears, he will let you know.

—And if they decide against him?

—If they decide against him, said Msimangu soberly, one of us will go to Pretoria on that day, and let you know—when it is finished. And now I must go, my friend. We must be up early in the morning. But of you too I ask a kindness.

—Ask all that I have, my friend.

—I ask that you will pray for me in this new thing I am about to do.

—I shall pray for you, morning and evening, all the days that are left.

—Good night, brother.

—Good night, Msimangu, friend of friends. And may God watch over you always.

—And you also.

Kumalo watched him go down the street and turn into the Mission House. Then he went into the room and lit his candle and opened the book. There was thirty-three pounds four shillings and fivepence in the book. He thanked God for all the kindnesses of men, and was comforted and uplifted. And these things done, he prayed for his son. Tomorrow they would all go home, all except his son. And he would stay in the place where they would put him, in the great prison in Pretoria, in the barred and solitary cell; and mercy failing, would stay there till he was hanged. Aye, but the hand that had murdered had once pressed the mother's breast into the thirsting mouth, had stolen into the father's hand when they went out into the dark. Aye, but the murderer afraid of death had once been a child afraid of the night.

In the morning he rose early, it was yet dark. He lit his candle, and suddenly remembering, went on his knees and prayed his prayer for Msimangu. He opened the door quietly, and shook the girl gently. It is time for us to rise, he said. She was eager at once, she started up from the blankets. I shall not be long, she said. He smiled at the eagerness. Ndotsheni, he said, tomorrow it is Ndotsheni. He opened Gertrude's door, and held up his candle. But Gertrude was gone. The little boy was there, the red dress and the white turban were there. But Gertrude was gone.

THE ENGINE steams and whistles over the veld of the Transvaal. The white flat hills of the mines drop behind, and the country rolls away as far as the eye can see. They sit all together, Kumalo, and the little boy on his knees, and the girl with her worldly possessions in one of those paper carriers that you find in the shops. The little boy has asked for his mother, but Kumalo tells him she has gone away, and he does not ask any more.

Darkness falls, and they thunder through the night, over battlefields

of long ago. They pass without seeing them the hills of Mooi River, Rosetta, Balgowan, lovely beyond any singing of it. As the sun rises they wind down the greatest hills of all, to Pietermaritzburg.

Here they enter another train, and the train runs along the valley of the Umsindusi, past the black slums, past Edendale, past Elandskop, and down into the great valley of the Umkomaas, where the tribes live, and the soil is sick almost beyond healing. And the people tell Kumalo that the rains will not fall; they cannot plough or plant, and there will be hunger in this valley.

At Donnybrook they enter still another train, the small toy train that runs to Ixopo through the green rolling hills of Eastwolds and Lufafa. And at Ixopo they alight, and people greet him and say, Au! but you have been a long time away.

There they enter the last train, that runs beside the lovely road that goes into the hills. Many people know him, and he is afraid of their questions. They talk like children, these people, and it is nothing to ask, who is this person, who is this girl, who is this child, where do they come from, where do they go. They will ask how is your sister, how is your son, so he takes his sacred book and reads in it, and they turn to another who has taste for conversation.

The sun is setting over the great valley of the Umzimkulu, behind the mountains of East Griqualand. His wife is there, and the friend to help the umfundisi with his bags. He goes to his wife quickly, and embraces her in the European fashion. He is glad to be home.

She looks her question, and he says to her, Our son is to die, perhaps there may be mercy, but let us not talk of it now.

—I understand you, she says.

—And Gertrude. All was ready for her to come. There we were all in the same house. But when I went to wake her, she was gone. Let us not talk of it now.

She bows her head.

—And this is the small boy, and this is our new daughter.

Kumalo's wife lifts the small boy and kisses him after the European fashion. You are my child, she says. She puts him down and goes to the girl who stands there humbly with her paper bag. She takes her in her

arms after the European fashion, and says to her, You are my daughter. And the girl bursts suddenly into weeping, so that the woman must say to her, Hush, hush, do not cry. She says to her further, Our home is simple and quiet, there are no great things there. The girl looks up through her tears and says, Mother, that is all that I desire.

Something deep is touched here, something that is good and deep. Although it comes with tears, it is like a comfort in such desolation.

Kumalo shakes hands with his friend, and they all set out on the narrow path that leads into the setting sun, into the valley of Ndotsheni. But here a man calls, Umfundisi, you are back, it is a good thing that you have returned. And here a woman says to another, Look, it is the umfundisi that has returned. One woman dressed in European fashion throws her apron over her head, and runs to the hut, calling and crying more like a child than a woman, It is the umfundisi that has returned. She brings her children to the door and they peep out behind her dresses to see the umfundisi that has returned.

A child comes into the path and she stands before Kumalo so that he must stop. We are glad that the umfundisi is here again, she says.

The path is dropping now, from the green hills where the mist feeds the grass and the bracken. It runs between the stones, and one must walk carefully for it is steep. A woman with child must walk carefully, so Kumalo's wife goes before the girl, and tells her, Here is a stone, be careful that you do not slip. Night is falling, and the hills of East Griqualand are blue and dark against the sky.

The path is dropping into the red land of Ndotsheni. It is a wasted land, a land of old men and women and children, but it is home. The maize hardly grows to the height of a man, but it is home.

—It is dry here, umfundisi. We cry for rain.

—I have heard it, my friend.

—Our mealies are nearly finished, umfundisi. It is known to *Tixo* alone what we shall eat.

The path grows more level, it goes by the little stream that runs by the church. Kumalo stops to listen to it, but there is nothing to hear.

—The stream does not run, my friend.

—It has been dry for a month, umfundisi.

—Where do you get water, then?

—The women must go to the river, umfundisi, that comes from the place of uJarvis.

At the sound of the name of Jarvis, Kumalo feels fear and pain, but he makes himself say, How is uJarvis?

—He returned yesterday, umfundisi. I do not know how he is. But the inkosikazi returned some weeks ago, and they say she is sick and thin. I work there now, umfundisi.

Kumalo is silent, and cannot speak. But his friend says to him, It is known here, he says.

—Ah, it is known.

—It is known, umfundisi.

They do not speak again, and the path levels out, running past the huts, and the red empty fields. There is calling here, and in the dusk one voice calls to another in some far distant place. If you are a Zulu you can hear what they say, but if you are not, even if you know the language, you would find it hard to know what is being called. Some white men call it magic, but it is no magic, only an art perfected. It is Africa, the beloved country.

—They call that you are returned, umfundisi.

—I hear it, my friend.

—They are satisfied, umfundisi.

Indeed they are satisfied. They come from the huts along the road, they come running down from the hills in the dark. The boys are calling and crying, with the queer tremulous call that is known in this country.

—Umfundisi, you have returned.

—Umfundisi, we give thanks for your return.

—Umfundisi, you have been too long away.

A child calls to him, There is a new teacher at the school. A second child says to her, Foolish one, it is a long time since she came. A boy salutes as he has learned in the school, and cries Umfundisi. He waits for no response, but turns away and gives the queer tremulous call, to no person at all, but to the air. He turns away and makes the first slow steps of a dance, for no person at all, but for himself.



There is a lamp outside the church, the lamp they light for the services. There are women of the church sitting on the red earth under the lamp; they are dressed in white dresses, each with a green cloth about her neck. They rise when the party approaches, and one breaks into a hymn, with a high note that cannot be sustained; but others come in underneath it, and support and sustain it, and some men come in too, with the deep notes and the true. Kumalo takes off his hat and he and his wife and his friend join in also, while the girl stands and watches in wonder. It is a hymn of thanksgiving, and the man remembers God in it, and prostrates himself and gives thanks for the Everlasting Mercy. And it echoes in the bare red hills and over the bare red fields of the broken tribe. And it is sung in love and humility and gratitude, and the humble simple people pour their lives into the song.

And Kumalo must pray. He prays, *Tixo*, we give thanks to Thee for Thy unending mercy. We give thanks to Thee for this safe return. We

give thanks to Thee for the love of our friends and our families. We give thanks to Thee for all Thy mercies.

Tixo, give us rain, we beseech Thee. . . .

And here they say Amen, so many of them that he must wait till they are finished.

Tixo, give us rain, we beseech Thee, that we may plough and sow our seed. And if there is no rain, protect us against hunger and starvation, we pray Thee.

And here they say Amen, so that he must wait again till they are finished.

His heart is warmed that they have so welcomed him, his heart is so warmed that he casts out his fear, and prays that which is deep within him.

Tixo, let this small boy be welcome in Ndotsheni, let him grow tall in this place. And his mother

His voice stops as though he cannot say it, but he humbles himself, and lowers his voice.

And his mother—forgive her her trespasses.

A woman moans, and Kumalo knows her, she is one of the great gossips of this place. So he adds quickly . . .

Forgive us all, for we all have trespasses. And *Tixo*, let this girl be welcome in Ndotsheni, and deliver her child safely in this place.

He pauses, then says gently . . .

Let her find what she seeks, and have what she desires.

And this is the hardest that must be prayed, but he humbles himself.

And *Tiro*, my son—

They do not moan, they are silent. Even the woman who gossips does not moan. His voice drops to a whisper—

Forgive him his trespasses.

It is done, it is out, the hard thing that was so feared. He knows it is not he, it is these people who have done it. Kneels he says. So they kneel on the bare red earth, and he raises his hand, and his voice also, and strength comes into the old and broken man, for is he not a priest?

The Lord bless you and keep you, and make His face to shine upon you, and give you peace, now and for ever. And the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you and abide with you, and with all those that are dear to you, now and for evermore. Amen.

The people have all gone now, and Kumalo turns to his friend.

—There are things I must tell you. Some day I shall tell you others, but some I must tell you now. My sister Gertrude was to come with us. We were all together, all ready in the house. But when I went to wake her, she was gone.

—Au! umfundisi.

—And my son, he is condemned to be hanged. He may be given mercy. They will let me know as soon as they hear.

—Au! umfundisi.

—You may tell your friends. And they will tell their friends. It is not a thing that can be hidden. Therefore you may tell them.

—I shall tell them, umfundisi.

—I do not know if I should stay here, my friend.

—Why, umfundisi?

—What, said Kumalo bitterly. With a sister who has left her child, and a son who has killed a man? Who am I to stay here?

—Umfundisi, it must be what you desire. But I tell you that there is not one man or woman that would desire it. There is not one man or

woman here that has not grieved for you, that is not satisfied that you are returned. Why, could you not see? Could it not touch you?

—I have seen and it has touched me. It is something, after all that has been suffered. My friend, I do not desire to go. This is my home here. I have lived so long here, I could not desire to leave it.

—That is good, umfundisi. And I for my part have no desire to live without you. For I was in darkness

—You touch me, my friend.

—Umfundisi, did you find out about Sibeko's daughter? You remember?

—Yes, I remember. And she too is gone. Where, there is not one that knows. They do not know, they said. Some bitterness came suddenly into him and he added, They said also, they do not care.

—Au! umfundisi!

—I am sorry, my friend.

The man sighed. I will go past Sibeko's, he said. I promised him so soon as I knew.

Kumalo walked soberly to the little house. Then he turned suddenly and called after his friend.

—I must explain to you, he said. It was the daughter of uSmith who said, she did not know, she did not care. She said it in English. And when uJarvis said it to me in Zulu, he said, She does not know. But uJarvis did not tell me that she said she did not care.

—I understand you, umfundisi.

—Go well, my friend.

—Stay well, umfundisi.

Kumalo turned again and entered the house, and his wife and the girl were eating.

—Where is the boy? he asked.

—Sleeping, Stephen. You have been a long time talking.

—Yes, there were many things to say.

—Did you put out the lamp?

—Let it burn a little longer.

—Has the church so much money, then?

He smiled at her. This is a special night, he said.

Her brow contracted with pain, he knew what she was thinking.

—I shall put it out, he said.

—Let it burn a little longer. Put it out when you have had your food.

—That will be right, he said soberly. Let it burn for what has happened here, let it be put out for what has happened otherwise.

He put his hand on the girl's head.

—Have you eaten, my child?

She looked up at him, smiling. I am satisfied, she said.

—To bed then, my child.

—Yes, father.

She got up from her chair. Sleep well, father, she said. Sleep well, mother.

—I shall take you to your room, my child.

When she came back, Kumalo was looking at the Post Office book. He gave it to her and said, There is money there, more than you and I have ever had.

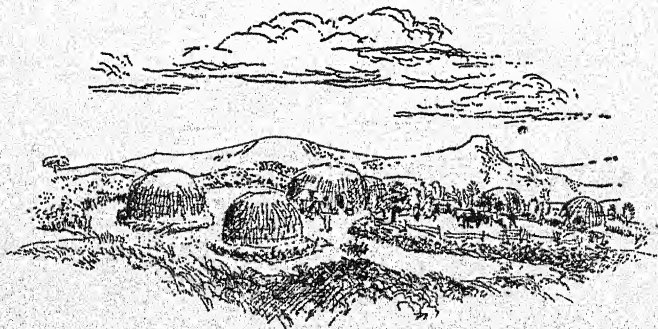
She opened it and cried out when she saw how much there was. Is it ours? she asked.

—It is ours, he said. It is a gift, from the best man of all my days.

—You will buy new clothes, she said. New black clothes, and new collars, and a new hat.

—And you will buy new clothes, also, he said. And a stove. Sit down, and I shall tell you about Msimangu, he said, and about other matters.

She sat down trembling. I am listening, she said.



KUMALO WAS in his house, and there in the great heat he struggled with the church accounts, until he heard the sounds of a horse, and he heard it stop outside the church. He went out to see who might be riding in this merciless sun. And for a moment he caught his breath in astonishment; it was a small white boy on a red horse, a small white boy as like to another who had ridden here as any could be.

The small boy smiled at Kumalo and raised his cap and said, Good morning. And Kumalo felt a strange pride that it should be so, and a strange humility that it should be so, and an astonishment that the small boy should not know the custom.

—Good morning, inkosana, he said. It is a hot day for riding.

—I don't find it hot. Is this your church?

—Yes, this is my church.

—I go to a church school. St. Mark's. It's the best school in Johannesburg. We've a chapel there.

—St. Mark's, said Kumalo excited. This church is St. Mark's. But your chapel—it is no doubt better than this?

—Well—yes—it is better, said the small boy smiling. But it's in the town, you know. Is that your house?

—Yes, this is my house.

—Could I see inside it? I've never been inside a parson's house. I mean a native parson's house.

—You are welcome to see inside it, inkosana.

The small boy slipped off his horse and made it fast to the poles that were there for the horses of those that came to the church. He dusted his feet on the frayed mat outside Kumalo's door, and taking off his cap, entered the house.

—This is a nice house, he said. I didn't expect it would be so nice.

—Not all our houses are such, said Kumalo gently. But a priest must keep his house nice. You have seen some of our other houses, perhaps?

—Oh yes, I have. On my grandfather's farm. They're not so nice as this. Is that your work there?

—Yes, inkosana.

—It looks like arithmetic.

—It is arithmetic. They are the accounts of the church.

—I didn't know that churches had accounts. I thought only shops had those.

And Kumalo laughed at him. And having laughed once, he laughed again, so that the small boy said to him, Why are you laughing? But the small boy was laughing also, he took no offence.

—I am just laughing, inkosana.

—Inkosana? That's little inkosi, isn't it?

—It is little inkosi. Little master, it means.

—Yes, I know. And what are you called? What do I call you?

—Umfundisi.

—I see. Imfundisi.

—No. Umfundisi.

—Umfundisi. What does it mean?

—It means parson.

—May I sit down, umfundisi? the small boy pronounced the word slowly. Is that right? he said.

Kumalo swallowed the laughter. That is right, he said. Would you like a drink of water? You are hot.

—I would like a drink of milk, said the boy. Ice-cold, from the fridge, he said.

—Inkosana, there is no fridge in Ndotsheni.

—Just ordinary milk then, umfundisi.

—Inkosana, there is no milk in Ndotsheni.

The small boy flushed. I would like water, umfundisi, he said.

Kumalo brought him the water, and while he was drinking, asked him, How long are you staying here, inkosana?

—Not very long now, umfundisi.

He went on drinking his water, then he said, These are not our real holidays now. We are here for special reasons.

And Kumalo stood watching him, and said in his heart, Oh, child bereaved, I know your reasons.

—Water is amanzi, umfundisi.

And because Kumalo did not answer him, he said, Umfundisi.

And again, Umfundisi.

—My child.

—Water is amanzi, umfundisi.

Kumalo shook himself out of his reverie. He smiled at the small eager face, and he said, That is right, inkosana.

—And horse is ihashi.

—That is right also.

—And house is ikaya.

—Right also.

—And money is imali.

—Right also.

—And boy is umfana.

—Right also?

—And cow is inkomo.

Kumalo laughed outright. Wait, wait, he said, I am out of breath. And he pretended to puff and gasp, and sat down on the chair, and wiped his brow.

—You will soon talk Zulu, he said.

—Zulu is easy. What's the time, umfundisi?

—Twelve o'clock, inkosana.

—Jeepers creepers, it's time I was off. Thank you for the water, umfundisi.

The small boy went to his horse. Help me up, he cried. Kumalo helped him up, and the small boy said, I'll come and see you again, umfundisi. I'll talk more Zulu to you.

Kumalo laughed. You will be welcome, he said.

—Umfundisi?

—Inkosana?

—Why is there no milk in Ndotsheni? Is it because the people are poor?

—Yes, inkosana.

—And what do the children do?

Kumalo looked at him. They die, my child, he said. Some of them are dying now.

—Who is dying now?

—The small child of Kuluse.

—Didn't the doctor come?

—Yes, he came.

—And what did he say?

—He said the child must have milk, inkosana.

—And what did the parents say?

—They said, Doctor, we have heard what you say.

And the small boy said in a small voice, I see. He raised his cap and said solemnly, Good-bye, umfundisi. He set off solemnly too, but it was not long before he was galloping wildly along the hot dusty road.

The night brought coolness and respite. While they were having their meal, Kumalo and his wife, the girl and the small boy, there was a sound of wheels, and a knock at the door, and there was the friend who had carried the bags.

—Umfundisi. Mother.

—My friend. Will you eat?

—No indeed. I am on my way home. I have a message for you.

—For me?

—Yes, from uJarvis. Was the small white boy here today?

Kumalo had a dull sense of fear, realizing for the first time what had been done.

—He was here, he said.

—We were working in the trees, said the man, when this small boy came riding up. I do not understand English, umfundisi, but they were talking about Kuluse's child. And come and look what I have brought you.

There outside the door was the milk, in the shining cans in the cart.

—This milk is for small children only, for those who are not yet at school, said the man importantly. And it is to be given by you only. And these sacks must be put over the cans, and small boys must bring water to pour over the sacks. And each morning I shall take back the cans. This will be done till the grass comes and we have milk again.

The man lifted the cans from the cart and said, Where shall I put

them, umfundisi? But Kumalo was dumb and stupid, and his wife said, We shall put them in the room that the umfundisi has in the church. So they put them there, and when they came back the man said, You would surely have a message for uJarvis, umfundisi. And Kumalo stuttered and stammered, and at last pointed his hand up at the sky. And the man said, *Tixo* will bless him, and Kumalo nodded.

A CHILD BROUGHT the four letters from the store to the school, and the headmaster sent them over to the house of the umfundisi. They were all letters from Johannesburg, one was from the boy Absalom to his wife, and another to his parents; they were both on His Majesty's Service, from the great prison in Pretoria. The third was from Msimangu himself, and the fourth from Mr. Carmichael. This one Kumalo opened fearfully, because it was from the lawyer who took the case for God, and would be about the mercy. And there the lawyer told him, in gentle and compassionate words, that there would be no mercy, and that his son would be hanged on the fifteenth day of that month. So he read no more but sat there an hour, two hours maybe. Indeed he neither saw sight nor heard sound till his wife said to him, It has come, then, Stephen.

And when he nodded, she said, Give it to me, Stephen. With shaking hands he gave it to her, and she read it also, and sat looking before her, with lost and terrible eyes, for this was the child of her womb, of her breasts. Yet she did not sit as long as he had done, for she stood up and said, It is not good to sit idle. Finish your letters, and go to see Kuluse's child, and the girl Elizabeth that is ill. And I shall do my work about the house.

—There is another letter, he said.

—From him? she said.

—From him.

He gave it to her, and she sat down again and opened it carefully and read it. The pain was in her eyes and her face and her hands, but he did not see it, for he stared before him on the floor, only his eyes were not looking at the floor but at no place at all, and his face was sunken, in the

same mould of suffering from which it had escaped since his return to this valley.

—Stephen, she said sharply.

He looked at her.

—Read it, finish it, she said. Then let us go to our work.

He took the letter and read it, it was short and simple, and except for the first line, it was in Zulu, as is often the custom:

My dear Father and Mother,

I am hoping you are all in health even as I am. They told me this morning there will be no mercy for the thing that I have done. So I shall not see you or Ndotsheni again.

This is a good place. I am locked in, and no one may come and talk to me. But I may smoke and read and write letters, and the white men do not speak badly to me.

There is a priest who comes to see me, a black priest from Pretoria. He is preparing me, and speaks well to me.

There is no more news here, so I close my letter. I think of you all at Ndotsheni, and if I were back there I should not leave it again.

Your son,
Absalom.

Is the child born? If it is a boy, I should like his name to be Peter. Have you heard of the case of Matthew and Johannes? I have been to the court to give evidence in this case, but they did not let me see it finish. My father, did you get the money in my Post Office Book?

While Kumalo stood there he saw a motor car coming down the road from Carisbrooke into the valley. It was a sight seldom seen, and the car went slowly because the road was not meant for cars, but only for carts and wagons and oxen. Then he saw that not far from the church there was a white man sitting still upon a horse. He seemed to be waiting for the car, and with something of a shock he realized that it was Jarvis. A white man climbed out of the car, and he saw with further surprise that it was the magistrate. Jarvis got down from his horse, and he shook hands with the magistrate, and with other white men that were climbing out of the car, bringing out with them sticks and flags. Then lo! from the other direction came riding the stout chief, in his fur cap and the riding-breeches, surrounded by his counsellors. The chief

saluted the magistrate, and the magistrate the chief, and there were other salutes also. Then they all stayed and talked together, so that it was clear that they had met together for some purpose. There was pointing of hands, to places distant and to places at hand. Then one of the counsellors began to cut down a small tree with straight clean branches. These branches he cut into lengths, and sharpened the ends, so that Kumalo stood more and more mystified. The white men brought out more sticks and flags from the car, and one of them set up a box on three legs, as though he would take photographs. Jarvis took some of the sticks and flags, and so did the magistrate, after he had taken off his coat because of the heat. They pointed to the clouds also, and Kumalo heard Jarvis say, It looks like rain at last.

Now the chief was not to be outdone by the white man, so he too got down from his horse and took some of the sticks, but Kumalo could see that he did not fully understand what was being done. Jarvis, who seemed to be in charge of these matters, planted one of the sticks in the ground, and the chief gave a stick to one of his counsellors, and said something to him. So the counsellor also planted the stick in the ground, but the white man with the box on the three legs called out, Not there, nor there, take that stick away. The counsellor was of two minds, and he looked hesitantly at the chief, who said angrily, Not there, not there, take it away. Then the chief, embarrassed and knowing still less what was to be done, got back on his horse and sat there, leaving the white men to plant the sticks.

So an hour passed, while there was quite an array of sticks and flags, and Kumalo looked on as mystified as ever. Jarvis and the magistrate stood together, and they kept on pointing at the hills, then turned and pointed down the valley. Then they talked to the chief, and the counsellors stood by, listening with grave attention to the conversation. Kumalo heard Jarvis say to the magistrate, That's too long. The magistrate shrugged, saying, That's the way these things are done. Then Jarvis said, I'll go to Pretoria. Would you mind? The magistrate said, I don't mind at all. It may be the way to get it. Then Jarvis said, I don't want to lose your company, but if you want to get home dry, you'd better be starting. This'll be no ordinary storm.

But Jarvis did not start himself. He said good-bye to the magistrate, and began to walk across the bare fields, measuring the distance with his strides. Kumalo heard the magistrate say to one of the white men, They say he's going queer. From what I've heard, he soon won't have any money left.

Then the magistrate said to the chief, You will see that not one of these sticks is touched or removed. He saluted the chief, and he and the other white men climbed into the car and drove away up the hill. The chief said to his counsellors, You will give orders that not one of these sticks is to be touched or removed. The counsellors then rode away, each to some part of the valley, and the chief rode past the church, returning Kumalo's greeting, but not stopping to tell him anything about this matter of the sticks.

Indeed it was true what Jarvis had said, that this would be no ordinary storm. For it was now dark and threatening over the valley. On the other side of the Umzimkulu the thunder was rolling without pause, and now and then the lightning would strike down among the far-off hills. But it was this for which all men were waiting, the rain at last. Women were hurrying along the paths, and with a sudden babel of sound the children poured out of the school, and the headmaster and his teachers were urging them, Hurry, hurry, do not loiter along the road.

It was something to see, a storm like this. A great bank of black and heavy cloud was moving over the Umzimkulu, and Kumalo stood for a long time and watched it.

He saw Jarvis hurrying back to his horse, which stood restlessly against the fence. With a few practised movements he stripped it of saddle and bridle, and saying a word to it, left it loose. Then he walked quickly in the direction of Kumalo, and called out to him, Umfundisi.

—Umnumzana.

—May I put these things in your porch, umfundisi, and stay in your church?

—Indeed, I shall come with you, umnumzana.

So they went into the church, and none too soon, for the thunder boomed out overhead, and they could hear the rain rushing across the

fields. In a moment it was drumming on the iron roof, with a deafening noise that made all conversation impossible. Kumalo lit a lamp in the church, and Jarvis sat down on one of the benches, and remained there without moving. But it was not long before the rain found the holes in the old rusted roof, and Jarvis had to move to avoid it.

Kumalo, nervous and wishing to make an apology, shouted at him, The roof leaks, and Jarvis shouted back at him, I have seen it.

And again the rain came down through the roof on the new place where Jarvis was sitting, so that he had to move again. He stood up and moved about in the semi-darkness, testing the benches with his hand, but it was hard to find a place to sit, for where there was a dry place on a bench, there was rain coming down on the floor, and where there was a dry place on the floor, there was rain coming down on the bench.

—The roof leaks in many places, Kumalo shouted, and Jarvis shouted in reply, I have seen that also.

At last Jarvis found a place where the rain did not fall too badly, and Kumalo found himself a place also, and they sat there together in silence. But outside it was not silent, with the cracking of the thunder, and the deafening downpour on the roof.



It was a long time that they sat there, and it was not until they heard the rushing of the streams, of dead rivers come to life, that they knew that the storm was abating. Indeed the thunder sounded farther away and there was a dull light in the church, and the rain made less noise.

It was nearly over when Jarvis rose and came and stood in the aisle near Kumalo. Without looking at the old man he said, Is there mercy?

Kumalo took the letter from his wallet with trembling hands; his hands trembled partly because of the sorrow, and partly because he was always so with this man. Jarvis took the letter and held it away from him so that the dull light fell on it. Then he put it back again in the envelope, and returned it to Kumalo.

—I do not understand these matters, he said, but otherwise I understand completely.

—I hear you, umnumzana.

Jarvis was silent for a while, looking towards the altar and the cross on the altar. When it comes to this fifteenth day, he said, I shall remember. Stay well, umfundisi.

But Kumalo did not say Go well. He did not offer to carry the saddle and the bridle, nor did he think to thank Jarvis for the milk. And least of all did he think to ask about the matter of the sticks. And when he rose and went out, Jarvis was gone. It was still raining, but lightly, and the valley was full of sound, of streams and rivers, all red with the blood of the earth.

THE STICKS stood for days in the places where the men had put them, but no one came again to the valley. It was rumoured that a dam was to be built here, but no one knew how it would be filled, because the small stream that ran past the church was sometimes dry, and was never a great stream at any time. Kumalo's friend told him that Jarvis had gone away to Pretoria, and his business was surely the business of the sticks, which was the business of the dam.

So the days passed. Kumalo prayed regularly for the restoration of Ndotsheni, and the sun rose and set regularly over the earth.

Kuluse's child was recovered, and Kumalo went about his pastoral

duties. More and more he found himself waiting for news of Jarvis's return, so that the people might know what plans were afoot; and more and more he found himself thinking that it was Jarvis and Jarvis alone that could perform the great miracle.

The girl was happy in her new home, for she had a dependent and affectionate nature. The small boy played with the other small boys, and had asked after his mother not more than once or twice; with time he would forget her. About Absalom no one asked, and if they talked about it in their huts, they let it make no difference in their respect for the old umfundisi.

One day the small white boy came galloping up, and when Kumalo came out to greet him, he raised his cap as before, and Kumalo found himself warm with pleasure to see his small visitor again.

—I've come to talk Zulu again, said the boy. He slid down from his horse, and put the reins round the post. He walked over to the house with the assurance of a man, and dusted his feet and took off his cap before entering the house. He sat down at the table and looked round with a pleasure inside him, so that a man felt it was something bright that had come into the house.

—Are the accounts finished, umfundisi?

—Yes, they are finished, inkosana.

—Were they right?

Kumalo laughed, he could not help himself.

—Yes, they were right, he said. But not very good.

—Not very good, eh? Are you ready for the Zulu?

Kumalo laughed again, and sat down in his chair at the other side of the table, and said, Yes, I am ready for the Zulu. When is your grandfather returning?

—I don't know, said the small boy. I want him to come back. I like him, he said.

Kumalo could have laughed again at this, but he thought perhaps it was not a thing to laugh at. But the small boy laughed himself, so Kumalo laughed also. It was easy to laugh with this small boy, there seemed to be laughter inside him.

—When are you going back to Johannesburg, inkosana?

—When my grandfather comes back.

And Kumalo said to him in Zulu, When you go, something bright will go out of Ndotsheni.

The small boy laughed with pleasure. I hear you, he said in Zulu.

And Kumalo clapped his hands in astonishment, and said, Au! Au! You speak Zulu, so that the small boy laughed with still greater pleasure, and Kumalo clapped his hands again, and made many exclamations.

—Are you ready for the Zulu, umfundisi?

—Indeed I am ready.

—Tree is umuti, umfundisi.

—That is right, inkosana.

—But medicine is also umuti, umfundisi.

And the small boy said this with an air of triumph, and a kind of mock bewilderment, so that they both laughed together.

—You see, inkosana, said Kumalo seriously, our medicines come mostly from trees. That is why the word is the same.

—I see, said the small boy, pleased with this explanation. And box is ibokisi.

—That is right, inkosana. You see, we had no boxes, and so our word is from your word.

—I see. And motor-bike is isitututu.

—That is right. That is from the sound that the motor-bike makes, so, isi-tu-tu-tu. But, inkosana, let us make a sentence. For you are giving me all the words that you know, and so you will not learn anything that is new. Now how do you say, I see a horse?

So the lesson went on, till Kumalo said to his pupil, It is nearly twelve o'clock, and perhaps it is time you must go.

—Yes, I must go, but I'll come back for some more Zulu.

—You must come back, inkosana. Soon you will be speaking better than many Zulus. You will be able to speak in the dark, and people will not know it is not a Zulu.

The small boy was pleased, and when they went out he said, Help me up, umfundisi. So Kumalo helped him up, and the small boy lifted his cap, and went galloping up the road. There was a car going up the road, and the small boy stopped his horse and cried, My grandfather is

back. Then he struck at the horse and set out in a wild attempt to catch up with the car.

There was a young man standing outside the church, a young pleasant-faced man of some twenty-five years, and his bags were on the ground. He took off his hat and said in English, You are the umfundisi?

—I am.

—And I am the new agricultural demonstrator. I have my papers here, umfundisi.

—Come into the house, said Kumalo, excited.

They went into the house, and the young man took out his papers and showed them to Kumalo. These papers were from parsons and school-inspectors and the like, and said that the bearer, Napoleon Letsitsi, was a young man of sober habits and good conduct, and another paper said that he had passed out of a school in the Transkei as an agricultural demonstrator. I see, said Kumalo. But you must tell me why you are here. Who sent you to me?

—Why, the white man who brought me.

—uJarvis, was that the name?

—I do not know the name, umfundisi, but it is the white man who has just gone.

Yes, that is uJarvis. Now tell me all.

—I am come here to teach farming, umfundisi.

—To us, in Ndotsheni?

—Yes, umfundisi.

Kumalo's face lighted up, and he sat there with his eyes shining. You are an angel from God, he said. He stood up and walked about the room, hitting one hand against the other, which the young man watched in amazement. Kumalo saw him and laughed at him, and said again, You are an angel from God. He sat down again and said to the young demonstrator, Where did the white man find you?

—He came to my home in Krugersdorp. I was teaching there at a school. He asked me if I would do a great work, and he told me about this place Ndotsheni. So I felt I would come here.

—And what about your teaching?

—I am not really a teacher, so they did not pay me well. The white

man said they would pay me ten pounds a month here, so I came. But I did not come only for the money. It was a small work there in the school.

Kumalo felt a pang of jealousy, for he had never earned ten pounds a month in all his sixty years. But he put it from him.

—The white man asked if I could speak Zulu, and I said No, but I could speak Xosa as well as I spoke my own language, for my mother was a Xosa. And he said that would do for Xosa and Zulu are almost the same.

Kumalo's wife opened the door and said, It is time for food. Kumalo said in Zulu, My wife, this is Mr. Letsitsi, who has come to teach our people farming. And he said to Letsitsi, You will eat with us.

They went to eat, and Letsitsi was introduced to the girl and the small boy. After Kumalo had asked a blessing, they sat down, and Kumalo said in Zulu, When did you arrive in Pietermaritzburg?

—This morning, umfundisi. And then we came with the motor-car to this place.

—And what did you think of the white man?

—He is very silent, umfundisi. He did not speak much to me.

—That is his nature.

—We stopped there on the road, overlooking a valley. And he said, What could you do in such a valley? Those were the first words we spoke on the journey.

—And did you tell him?

—I told him, umfundisi.

—And what did he say?

—He said nothing, umfundisi. He made a noise in his throat, that was all.

—And then?

—He did not speak till we got here. He said to me, Go to the umfundisi, and ask him to find lodgings for you. Tell him I am sorry I cannot come, but I am anxious to get to my home.

Kumalo looked at his wife, and she at him.

—Our rooms are small, and this is a parson's house, said Kumalo, but you may stay here if you wish.

—My people are also of the Church. I should be glad to stay here.

—And what will you do in this valley?

The young demonstrator laughed. I must look at it first, he said.

—But what would you have done in that other valley?

So the young man told them all he would have done in the other valley, how the people must stop burning the dung and must put it back into the land, how they must gather the weeds together and treat them and not leave them to wither away in the sun, how they must stop ploughing up and down the hills, how they must plant trees for fuel, trees that grow quickly like wattles, in some place where they could not plough at all, on the steep sides of streams so that the water did not rush away in the storms.

But these were hard things to do, because the people must learn that it is harmful for each man to wrest a living from his own little piece of ground. Some must give up their ground for trees, and some for pastures. And hardest of all would be the custom of lobola, by which a man pays for his wife in cattle, for people kept too many cattle for this purpose, and counted all their wealth in cattle, so that the grass had no chance to recover.

—And is there to be a dam? asked Kumalo.

—Yes, there is to be a dam, said the young man, so that the cattle always have water to drink. And the water from the dam can be let out through a gate, and can water this land and that, and can water the pastures that are planted.

—But where is the water to come from?

—It will come by a pipe from a river, said the young demonstrator. That is what the white man said.

—That will be his river, said Kumalo. And can all these things you have been saying, can they all be done in Ndotsheni?

—There are many things that can be done, umfundisi.

—Truly?

—Umfundisi, said the young man, and his face was eager, there is no reason why this valley should not be what it was before. But it will not happen quickly. Not in a day.

—If God wills, said Kumalo humbly, before I die. For I have lived my life in destruction.

EVERYTHING was ready for the confirmation. The women of the church were there, in their white dresses, each with the green cloth about her neck. Those men that were not away, and who belonged to this church, were there in their Sunday clothes, which means their working clothes, patched and cleaned and brushed. The children for the confirmation were there, the girls in their white dresses and caps, the boys in their school-going clothes, patched and cleaned and brushed. Women were busy in the house, helping the wife of the umfundisi, for after the confirmation there would be a simple meal, of tea boiled till the leaves had no more tea left in them, and of heavy homely cakes made of the meal of the maize. It was simple food, but it was to be eaten together.

And over the great valley the storm clouds were gathering again in the heavy oppressive heat, so that one did not know whether to be glad or sorry.

Kumalo looked at the sky anxiously, and at the road by which the Bishop would come; and while he was looking he was surprised to see his friend driving along the road, with the cart that brought the milk. For the milk never came so early.

—You are early, my friend.

—I am early, umfundisi, said his friend gravely. We work no more today. The inkosikazi is dead.

—Au! Au! said Kumalo, it cannot be.

—It is so, umfundisi. When the sun stood so—and he pointed above his head—it was then that she died.

—Au! Au! It is a sorrow.

—It is a sorrow, umfundisi.

—And the umnumzana?

—He goes about silent. You know how he is. But this time the silence is heavier. Umfundisi, I shall go and wash myself, then I can come to the confirmation.

—Go then, my friend.

Kumalo went into the house, and he told his wife. The inkosikazi is dead. And she said, Au! Au! and the woman also. Some of them wept, and they spoke of the goodness of the woman that was dead. Kumalo

went to his table, and sat down there, thinking what he should do. When this confirmation was over he would go up to the house at High Place, and tell Jarvis of their grief here in the valley. But there came a picture to him of the house of bereavement, of all the cars of the white people that would be there, of the black-clothed farmers that would stand about in little groups, talking gravely and quietly, for he had seen such a thing before. And he knew that he could not go, for this was not according to the custom. He would stand there by himself, and unless Jarvis himself came out, no one would ask why he was there, no one would know that he had brought a message. He sighed, and took out some paper from the drawer. He decided it must be written in English, for although most white men of these parts spoke Zulu, there were few who could read or write it. So he wrote then. And he wrote many things, and tore them up and put them aside, but at last it was finished.

Umnumzana,

We are grieved here at this church to hear that the mother has passed away, and we understand it and suffer with tears. We are certain also that she knew of the things you have done for us, and did something in it. We shall pray in this church for the rest of her soul, and for you also in your suffering.

Your faithful servant,
Rev. S. Kumalo.

When it was finished, he sat wondering if he should send it. For suppose this woman had died of a heart that was broken, because her son had been killed. Then was he, the father of the man who had killed him, to send such a letter? Had he not heard that she was sick and thin? He groaned as he wrestled with this difficult matter, but as he sat there uncertain, he thought of the gift of the milk, and of the young demonstrator that had come to teach farming, and above all, he remembered the voice of Jarvis saying, even as if he were speaking now in this room, Is there mercy? And he knew then that this was a man who put his feet upon a road, and that no man would turn him from it. So he sealed the letter, and went out and called a boy to him and said, My child, will you take a letter for me? And the boy said, I shall do it, umfundisi. Go

to Kuluse, said Kumalo, and ask him for his horse, and take this letter to the house of uJarvis. Do not trouble the umnumzana, but give this letter to any person that you see about the place. And, my child, go quietly and respectfully, and do not call to any person there, and do not laugh or talk idly, for the inkosikazi is dead. Do you understand?

—I understand completely, umfundisi.

—Go then, my child. I am sorry you cannot be here to see the confirmation.

—It does not matter, umfundisi.

Then Kumalo went to tell the people that the inkosikazi was dead. And they fell silent, and if there had been any calling or laughter or talking idly, there was no more. They stood there talking quietly and soberly till the Bishop came.

It was dark in the church for the confirmation, so that they had to light the lamps. The great heavy clouds swept over the valley, and the lightning flashed over the red desolate hills, where the earth had torn away like flesh. The thunder roared over the valleys of old men and old women, of mothers and children. The men are away, the young men, and the girls are away, the soil cannot keep them any more. And some of the children are there in the church being confirmed, and after a while they too will go away, for the soil cannot keep them any more.

It was dark there in the church, and the rain came down through the roof. The pools formed on the floor, and the people moved here and there, to get away from the rain. Some of the white dresses were wet, and a girl shivered there with the cold, because this occasion was solemn for her, and she did not dare to move out of the rain. And the voice of the Bishop said, Defend, oh Lord, this Thy child with Thy heavenly grace, that he may continue Thine for ever, and daily increase in Thy Holy Spirit more and more, till he come unto Thy everlasting Kingdom. And this he said to each child that came, and confirmed them all.

After the confirmation they crowded into the house, for the simple food that was to be taken. Kumalo had to ask those who were not that day confirmed, or who were not parents of those confirmed, to stay in the church, for it was still raining heavily, though the lightning and the thunder had passed. Yet the house was full to overflowing.

At last the rain was over, and the Bishop and Kumalo were left alone in the room where Kumalo did his accounts. The Bishop lit his pipe and said to Kumalo, Mr. Kumalo, I should like to talk to you. And Kumalo sat down fearfully, afraid of what would be said.

—I was sorry to hear of all your troubles, my friend.

—They have been heavy, my lord.

—I did not like to worry you, Mr. Kumalo, after all you had suffered. And I thought I had better wait till this confirmation.

—Yes, my lord.

—I speak to you out of my regard for you, my friend. You must be sure of that.

—Yes, my lord.

—Then I think, Mr. Kumalo, that you should go away from Ndotsheni.

Yes, that is what would be said, it is said now. Yes, that is what I have feared. Yet take me away, and I die. I am too old to begin any more. I am old, I am frail. Yet I have tried to be a father to this people. Could you not have been here, oh Bishop, the day when I came back to Ndotsheni? Would you not have seen that these people love me, although I am old? Would you not have heard a child say, We are glad the umfundisi is back? Would you take me away just when new things are beginning, when there is milk for the children, and the young demonstrator has come, and the sticks for the dam are planted in the ground? The tears fill the eyes, and the eyes shut, and the tears are forced out, and they fall on the new black suit, made for this confirmation with the money of Msimangu. The old head is bowed, and the old man sits there like a child, with not a word to be spoken. Mr. Kumalo, says the Bishop gently, and then again, more loudly, Mr. Kumalo.

—Sir, my lord.

—I am sorry to distress you. I am sorry to distress you. But would it not be better if you went away?

—It is what you say, my lord.

The Bishop sits forward in his chair, and rests his elbows upon his knees. Mr. Kumalo, is it not true that the father of the murdered man is your neighbour here in Ndotsheni? Mr. Jarvis?

—It is true, my lord.

—Then for that reason alone I think you should go.

Is that a reason why I should go? Why, does he not ride here to see me, and did not the small boy come into my house? Did he not send the milk for the children, and did he not get this young demonstrator to teach the people farming? And does not my heart grieve for him, now that the inkosikazi is dead? But how does one say these things to a Bishop, to a great man in the country? They are things that cannot be said.

—Do you understand me, Mr. Kumalo?

—I understand you, my lord.

—I would send you to Pietermaritzburg, to your old friend Ntombela. You could help him there, and it would take a load off your shoulders. He can worry about buildings and schools and money, and you can give your mind to the work of a priest. That is the plan I have in mind.

—I understand you, my lord.

—If you stay here, Mr. Kumalo, there will be many loads on your shoulders. There is not only the fact that Mr. Jarvis is your neighbour, but sooner or later you must rebuild your church, and that will cost a great deal of money and anxiety. You saw for yourself today in what condition it is.

—Yes, my lord.

—And I understand you have brought back to live with you the wife of your son, and that she is expecting a child. Is it fair to them to stay here, Mr. Kumalo? Would it not be better to go to some place where these things are not known?

—I understand you, my lord.

There was a knock at the door, and it was the boy standing there, the boy who took the message. Kumalo took the letter, and it was addressed to the Reverend S. Kumalo, Ndotsheni. He thanked the boy and closed the door, then went and sat down in his chair, ready to listen to the Bishop.

—Read your letter, Mr. Kumalo.

So Kumalo opened the letter, and read it.

Umfundisi,

I thank you for your message of sympathy, and for the promise of the prayers of your church. You are right, my wife knew of the things that are being done, and had the greatest part in it. These things we did in memory of our beloved son. It was one of her last wishes that a new church should be built at Ndotsheni, and I shall come to discuss it with you.

Yours truly,
James Jarvis.

You should know that my wife was suffering before we went to Johannesburg.

Kumalo stood up, and he said in a voice that astonished the Bishop, This is from God. It was a voice in which there was relief from anxiety, and laughter, and weeping, and he said again, looking round the walls of the room, This is from God.

—May I see your letter from God? said the Bishop dryly.

So Kumalo gave it to him eagerly, and stood impatiently while the Bishop read it. And when the Bishop had finished, he said gravely, That was a foolish jest. This is truly a letter from God.

He read it again, and blew his nose, and sat with the letter in his hand. What are the things that are being done? he asked.

So Kumalo told him about the milk, and the new dam that was to be built, and the young demonstrator. And the Bishop blew his nose several times, and said to Kumalo, This is an extraordinary thing. It is one of the most extraordinary things that I have ever heard.

And Kumalo explained the words, You should know that my wife was suffering before we went to Johannesburg. He explained how these words were written out of understanding and compassion. And he told the Bishop of the words, Is there mercy?; and of the small boy who visited him, the small boy with the laughter inside him.

The Bishop said, Let us go into the church and pray, if there is a dry place to pray in your church. Then I must go, for I have still a long journey. But let me first say good-bye to your wife, and your daughter-in-law. Tell me, what of the other matter, of your daughter-in-law, and the child she is expecting?

—We have prayed openly before the people, my lord. What more could be done than that?

—It was the way it was done in olden days, said the Bishop. In the olden days when men had faith. But I should not say that, after what I have heard today.

The Bishop said farewell to the people of the house, and he and Kumalo went to the church. At the church door he spoke to Kumalo gravely, I see it is not God's will that you leave Ndotsheni.

After the Bishop had gone, Kumalo stood outside the church in the gathering dark. It was cool, and the breeze blew gently from the great river, and the soul of the man was uplifted. And while he stood there looking out over the great valley, there was a voice that cried out of heaven, Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, these things will I do unto you, and not forsake you.

It did not happen as men deem such things to happen, it happened otherwise, in that fashion men call illusion, or the imaginings of people overwrought, or an intimation of the divine.

When Kumalo went into the house, he found his wife and the girl, and some other women of the church, and his friend who carried the bags, busy making a wreath. They had a cypress branch, for there was a solitary cypress near the hut of his friend, the only cypress that grew in the whole valley of Ndotsheni, and how it grew there no man could remember. This branch they had made into a ring, and tied it so that it could not spring apart. Into it they had put the flowers of the veld, such as grew in the bareness of the valley. I do not like it, umfundisi. What is wrong with it? It does not look like a white person's wreath.

—They use white flowers, said the new teacher. I have often seen that they use white flowers there in Pietermaritzburg.

—Umfundisi, said the friend excitedly, I know where there are white flowers, arum lilies.

—They use arum lilies, said the new teacher, also excited.

—But they are far away. They grow near the railway line, on the far side of Carisbrooke, by a little stream that I know.

—That is far away, said Kumalo.

—I shall go there, said the man. It is not too far to go for such a thing

as this. And then he said, can you lend me a lantern, umfundisi?

—Surely, my friend.

—And there must be a white ribbon, said the teacher.

—I have one at my house, said a woman. I shall go and fetch it.

—Stephen, will you write a card for us? Have you such a card?

—The edges of it should be black, said the teacher.

—Yes, I can find a card, said Kumalo, and I shall put black edges on it with the ink. He went to his room where he did the accounts, and he found such a card, and printed on it:

With sympathy from the
people of St. Mark's Church,
Ndotsheni.

He was busy with the edges, careful not to spoil the card with the ink, when his wife called him to come to his food.

THERE IS ploughing in Ndotsheni, and indeed on all the farms around it. But the ploughing goes slowly, because the young demonstrator, and behind him the chief, tell the men they must no longer go up and down. They throw up walls of earth, and plough round the hills, so that the fields look no longer like they used to look in the old days of ploughing. Women and boys collect the dung, but it looks so little on



the land that the chief has ordered a kraal to be built, where the cattle can stay and the dung be easily collected; but that is a hard thing, because there will be nothing to eat in the kraal. The young demonstrator shakes his head over the dung, but next year he says it will be better. The wattle seed is boiled, and no one has heard of such a thing before in this valley, but those that have worked for the white farmers say it is right, and so they boil it. For this seed one or two desolate places have been chosen, but the young demonstrator shakes his head over them, there is so little food in the soil. And the demonstrator has told the people they can throw away the maize they have kept for the planting, because it is inferior and he has better seed from uJarvis. But they do not throw it away, they keep it for eating.

But all this was not done by magic. There have been meetings, and much silence, and much sullenness. It was only the fear of the chief that made anything come out of these meetings. No one was more dissatisfied than those who had to give up their fields. Kuluse's brother was silent for days because the dam was to eat up his land, and he was dissatisfied with the poor piece of land they gave him. Indeed the umfundisi had to persuade him, and it was hard to refuse the umfundisi, because it was through him that had come the milk that had saved his brother's child.

The chief had hinted that there were still harder things he would ask, and indeed the young demonstrator was dissatisfied that they had not been asked at once. But it would be hard to get these people to agree to everything at once. Even this year he hoped, said the young demonstrator, that the people would see something good with their eyes, although he shook his head sadly over the poverty-stricken soil.

There was talk that the Government would give a bull to the chief, and the young demonstrator explained to Kumalo that they would get rid of the cows that gave the smallest yield, but he did not talk thus in the meeting, for that was one of the hard things for a people who counted their wealth in cattle, even these miserable cattle.

But the greatest wonder of all is the great machine, that was fighting in the war they said, and pushes the earth of Kuluse's brother's land over to the line of the sticks, and leaves it there, growing ever higher and higher. And even Kuluse's brother, watching it sullenly, breaks out

into unwilling laughter, but remembers again and is sullen. But there is some satisfaction for him, for next year, when the dam is full, Zuma and his brother must both give up their land that lies below the dam, for white man's grass is to be planted there, to be watered from the dam, to be cut and thrown into the kraal where the cattle will be kept. And both Zuma and his brother laughed at him, because he was sullen about the dam; so in some measure he is satisfied.

Indeed there is something new in this valley, some spirit and some life, and much to talk about in the huts. Although nothing has come yet, something is here already.

This was the fourteenth day. Kumalo said to his wife, I am going up into the mountain. And she said, I understand you. For twice before he had done it, once when the small boy Absalom was sick unto death, and once when he had thought of giving up the ministry to run a native store at Donnybrook for a white man named Baxter, for more money than the church could ever pay. And there was a third time, but that was without her knowledge, for she was away, and he had been sorely tempted to commit adultery with one of the teachers at Ndotsheni, who was weak and lonely.

—Would you come with me, he said, for I do not like to leave you alone? She was touched and she said, I cannot come, for the girl is near her time, and who knows when it will be? But you must certainly go.

She made him a bottle of tea, of the kind that is made by boiling the leaves, and she wrapped up a few heavy cakes of maize. He took his coat and his stick and walked up the path that went to the place of the chief. But at the first fork you go to the side of the hand that you eat with, and you climb another hill to other huts that lie beneath the mountain itself. There you turn and walk under the mountain to the east, as though you were going to the far valley of Empayeni, which is another valley where the fields are red and bare, a valley of old men and women, and mothers and children. But when you reach the end of the level path, where it begins to fall to this other valley, you strike upward into the mountain itself. This mountain is called Emoyeni, which means, in the winds, and it stands high above Carisbrooke and the tops, and higher still above the valleys of Ndotsheni and Empayeni. Indeed it is a rampart

of the great valley itself, the valley of Umzimkulu, and from it you look down on one of the fairest scenes of Africa.

Now it was almost dark, and he was alone in the dusk; which was well, for one did not go publicly on a journey of this nature. But even as he started to climb the path that ran through the great stones, a man on a horse was there, and a voice said to him, It is you, umfundisi?

—It is I, umnumzana.

—Then we are well met, umfundisi. For here in my pocket I have a letter for the people of your church. He paused for a moment, and then he said, The flowers were of great beauty, umfundisi.

—I thank you, umnumzana.

—And the church, umfundisi. Do you desire a new church?

Kumalo could only smile and shake his head, there were no words in him. And though he shook his head as if it were No, Jarvis understood him. The plans will shortly come to you, and you must say if they are what you desire.

—I shall send them to the Bishop, umnumzana.

—You will know what to do. But I am anxious to do it quickly, for I shall be leaving this place.

Kumalo stood shocked at the frightening and desolating words. And although it was dark, Jarvis understood him, for he said swiftly, I shall be often here. You know I have a work in Ndotsheni. Tell me, how is the young man?

—He works night and day. There is no quietness in him.

The white man laughed softly. That is good, he said. Then he said gravely, I am alone in my house, so I am going to Johannesburg to live with my daughter and her children. You know the small boy?

—Indeed, umnumzana, I know him.

—Is he like him?

—He is like him, umnumzana.

And then Kumalo said, Indeed, I have never seen such a child as he is.

Jarvis turned on his horse, and in the dark the grave silent man was eager. What do you mean? he asked.

—Umnumzana, there is a brightness inside him.

—Yes, yes, that is true. The other was even so.

And then he said, like a man with hunger, Do you remember?

And because this man was hungry, Kumalo, though he did not well remember, said, I remember.

They stayed there in silence till Jarvis said, Umfundisi, I must go. But he did not go. Instead he said, Where are you going at this hour?

Kumalo was embarrassed, and the words fell about on his tongue, but he answered, I am going into the mountain.

Because Jarvis made no answer he sought for words to explain it, but before he had spoken a word, the other had already spoken. I understand you, he said, I understand completely. And because he spoke with compassion, the old man wept, and Jarvis sat embarrassed on his horse. Indeed he might have come down from it, but such a thing is not lightly done. But he stretched his hand over the darkening valley, and he said, One thing is about to be finished, but here is something that is only begun. And while I live it will continue. Umfundisi, go well.

—Umnumzana!

—Yes.

—Do not go before I have thanked you. For the young man, and the milk. And now for the church.

—I have seen a man, said Jarvis with a grim gaiety, who was in darkness till you found him. If that is what you do, I give it willingly.

Perhaps it was something deep that was here, or perhaps the darkness gives courage, but Kumalo said, Truly, of all the white men that I have ever known

—I am no saintly man, said Jarvis fiercely.

—Of that I cannot speak, but God put His hands on you.

And Jarvis said, That may be, that may be. He turned suddenly to Kumalo. Go well, umfundisi. Throughout this night, stay well.

And Kumalo cried after him, Go well, go well.

Indeed there were other things, deep things, that he could have cried, but such a thing is not lightly done. He waited till the sounds of the horse had died away, then started to climb heavily, holding on to the greatest stones, for he was young no longer. He was tired and panting when he reached the summit, and he sat down on a stone to rest, looking out over the great valley, to the mountains of Ingeli and East Griqualand,

dark against the sky. Then recovered, he walked a short distance and found the place that he had used before on these occasions. It was an angle in the rock, sheltered from the winds, with a place for a man to sit on, his legs at ease over the edge. The first of these occasions he remembered clearly, perhaps because it was the first, perhaps because he had come to pray for the child that no prayer could save any more. The child could not write then, but here were three letters from him now, and in all of them he said, If I could come back to Ndotsheni, I would not leave it any more. And in a day or two they would receive the last he would ever write. His heart went out in a great compassion for the boy that must die, who promised now, when there was no more mercy, to sin no more. If he had got to him sooner, perhaps. He knitted his brows at the memory of that terrible and useless questioning, the terrible and useless answering. It is as my father wishes, it is as my father says. What would it have helped if he had said, My father, I do not know?

He turned aside from such fruitless remembering, and set himself to the order of his vigil. He confessed his sins, remembering them as well as he could since the last time he had been in this mountain. All this he did as fully as he could, and prayed for absolution.

Then he turned to thanksgiving, and remembered, with profound awareness, that he had great cause for thanksgiving, and that for many things. He took them one by one, giving thanks for each, and praying for each person that he remembered. There was above all the beloved Msimangu and his generous gift. There was the young man from the reformatory. There was Mrs. Lithebe, who said so often, Why else were we born? And Father Vincent, holding both his hands and saying, Anything, anything, you have only to ask, I shall do anything. And the lawyer that took the case for God, and had written to say there was no mercy in such kind and gentle words.

Then there was the return to Ndotsheni, with his wife and his friend to meet him. And the women waiting at the church. And the great joy of the return, so that pain was forgotten.

He pondered long over this, for might not another man, returning to another valley, have found none of these things? Why was it given to one man to have his pain transmuted into gladness? Why was it given

to one man to have such an awareness of God? And might not another, having no such awareness, live with pain that never ended? Why was there a compulsion upon him to pray for the restoration of Ndotsheni, and why was there a white man there on the tops, to do in this valley what no other could have done? And why of all men, the father of the man who had been murdered by his son? And might not another feel also a compulsion, and pray night and day without ceasing, for the restoration of some other valley that would never be restored?

But his mind would contain it no longer. It was not for man's knowing. He put it from his mind, for it was a secret.

And then the white man Jarvis, and the inkosikazi that was dead, and the small boy with the brightness inside him. As his mind could not contain that other, neither could this be contained. But here were thanks that a man could render till the end of his days. And some of them he strove now to render.

He woke with a start. It was cold, but not so cold. He had never slept before on these vigils, but he was old, not quite finished, but nearly finished. He thought of all those that were suffering, of Gertrude the weak and foolish one, of the people of Shanty Town and Alexandra, of his wife now at this moment. But above all of his son, Absalom. Would he be awake, would he be able to sleep, this night before the morning? He cried out, My son, my son, my son.

With his crying he was now fully awake, and he looked at his watch and saw that it was one o'clock. The sun would rise soon after five, and it was then it was done, they said. If the boy was asleep, then let him sleep, it was better. But if he was awake, then, oh Christ of the abundant mercy, be with him. Over this he prayed long and earnestly.

Would his wife be awake, and thinking of it? She would have come with him, were it not for the girl. And the girl, why, he had forgotten her. But she was no doubt asleep; she was loving enough, but this husband had given her so little, no more than her others had done.

And now he prayed for all the people of Africa, the beloved country. *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* (God save Africa). But he would not see that salvation. It lay afar off, because men were afraid of it. Because, to tell

the truth, they were afraid of him, and his wife, and Msimangu, and the young demonstrator. And what was there evil in their desires, in their hunger? That men should walk upright in the land where they were born, and be free to use the fruits of the earth, what was there evil in it? Yet men were afraid, with a fear that was deep, deep in the heart, a fear so deep that they hid their kindness, or brought it out with fierceness and anger, and hid it behind fierce and frowning eyes. They were afraid because they were so few. And such fear could not be cast out, but by love.

It was Msimangu who had said, Msimangu who had no hate for any man, I have one great fear in my heart, that one day when they turn to loving they will find we are turned to hating.

Oh, the grave and the sombre words.

When he woke again there was a faint change in the east, and he looked at his watch almost with panic. But it was four o'clock and he was reassured. And now it was time to be awake, for it might be they had wakened his son, and called him to make ready. He left his place and could hardly stand, for his feet were cold and numb. He found another place where he could look to the east, and if it was true what men said, when the sun came up over the rim, it would be done.

He had heard that they could eat what they wished on a morning like this. Strange that a man should ask for food at such a time. Did the body hunger, driven by some deep dark power that did not know it must die? Is the boy quiet, and does he dress quietly, and does he think of Ndotsheni now? Do tears come into his eyes, and does he wipe them away, and stand up like a man? Does he say, I will not eat any food, I will pray? Is Msimangu there with him, or Father Vincent, or some other priest whose duty it is, to comfort and strengthen him, for he is afraid of the hanging? Does he repent him, or is there only room for his fear? Is there nothing that can be done now, is there not an angel that comes there and cries, This is for God not for man, come child, come with me?

He looked out of his clouded eyes at the faint steady lightening in the east. But he calmed himself, and took out the heavy maize cakes and the

tea, and put them upon a stone. And he gave thanks, and broke the cakes and ate them, and drank of the tea. Then he gave himself over to deep and earnest prayer, and after each petition he raised his eyes and looked to the east. And the east lightened and lightened, till he knew that the time was not far off. And when he expected it, he rose to his feet and took off his hat and laid it down on the earth, and clasped his hands before him. And while he stood there the sun rose in the east. ,

Yes, it is the dawn that has come. The titihoya wakes from sleep, and goes about its work of forlorn crying. The sun tips with light the mountains of Ingeli and East Griqualand. The great valley of the Umzimkulu is still in darkness, but the light will come there. Ndotsheni is still in darkness, but the light will come there also. For it is the dawn that has come, as it has come for a thousand centuries, never failing. But when that dawn will come, of our emancipation, from the fear of bondage and the bondage of fear, why, that is a secret.



LIST OF WORDS

Afrikaans

The language of the Afrikaner, a much simplified and beautiful version of the language of Holland, though it is held in contempt by some ignorant English-speaking South Africans, and indeed by some Hollanders. Afrikaans and English are the two official languages of the Union of South Africa.

Inkosána

The "i" as in "pit," the "o" midway between "o" in "pot" and "o" in "born." The "a" as in "father," but the second "a" is hardly sounded. Approximate pronunciation "inkosaan." Means little chief or little master.

Inkósi

As above. But the final "i" is hardly sounded. Means chief or master.

Inkósikazi

As above. The second "k" is like hard "g." The final "i" is hardly sounded. Pronounce "inkosigaaz." Means mistress.

Kraal

An Afrikaans word now as fully English. Pronounced in English "crawl." Means in this book an enclosure for cattle, when they come for milking. But it may also mean a number of huts together, under the rule of the head of the family, who is of course subject to the chief.

Kumálo

"u" as "oo" as in "book." "a" as in "father." The "o" midway between "o" in "pot" and "o" in "born."

Titihóya

A plover-like bird. The name is onomatopœic.

Tixo

I rejected the Zulu word for the Great Spirit as too long and difficult. This is the Xosa word. It is also difficult to pronounce, but may be pronounced "Teeko," the "o" being midway between the "o" in "pot" and the "o" of "born."

Umfúndisi

The last "i" is hardly sounded. Pronounced approximately "oomfoon-dees," the "oo" being as in "book," and the "ees" as "eace" in the word "peace." Means parson, but is also a title and used with respect.

Umnúnzana

Pronounced "oomnóomzaan." Means "sir."

Veld

An Afrikaans word now as fully English. Pronounced in both languages as "felt." Means open grass country. Or it may mean the grass itself, as when a farmer looks down at his feet, and says, this veld is poor.

Alan Paton



BEFORE achieving world-wide fame as an author, Alan Paton was well-known in his native South Africa as "the man who pulled up the barbed-wire fence and planted geraniums." In 1935, after ten years' experience as a teacher, he became principal of the Diepkloof Reformatory near Johannesburg. He had six hundred and fifty African youths in his charge, their ages ranging from ten to twenty-one, their offences from petty theft to rape and murder. Paton relaxed the rigid penal discipline and substituted a system of "graduated freedom" through which inmates earned their privileges and eventual discharge.

The Reformatory staff were deeply suspicious of such "dangerous" ideas. But as those ideas began to succeed, Paton converted them to his point of view, based on the Christian conviction that every human being matters. At Diepkloof and in the native slums of Johannesburg, he saw the grim impact of industrialization and urbanization on simple tribal people. His experience in these years provided the stuff of *Cry, the Beloved Country*.

Mr. Paton, a small wiry man of fifty-two, is still somewhat dazed by the international enthusiasm his novel has aroused. His book has been published in twelve languages, and in South Africa has outsold every other work except the Bible.

Recently the author said: "I do believe there is a level at which one can state an overwhelming truth that a man just cannot deny. After he has confronted the truth in that fashion, he is not the same man again."

In that final sentence, Mr. Paton sums up the reaction of thousands of readers to *Cry, the Beloved Country*.